인류학석사학위논문

Manufacturing of Kinship in a Nation Divided :

An Ethnographic Study of North Korean Refugees in South Korea

-결별과 결속: 탈북인들의 친척 '만들기'-

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서울대학교 대학원

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이 논문을 인류학석사 학위논문으로 제출함.

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Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my mum for proofreading numerous versions of this thesis, for being a constant source of good ideas and remaining so strong, positive and supportive during difficult times.

For my Dad, Mum and brother.
Because it's all about family.

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Note to the Reader

All Korean names have been romanized according to the 'The Revised Romanization of Korean'. [1] This is accepted as the official Korean language Romanization system in South Korea, as proclaimed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. This system replaced the older McCune–Reischauer system.[2]

I have presented the names of participants with family names following personal names, with the exception of names such as Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung, in which case it has become the norm to express the family names first.

Throughout this thesis I have mainly used the word "talbukin" to refer to North Korean refugees. This was a conscious decision and one made after consultation with several people who work closely with people who come from North Korea and have a thorough understanding of the politics involved in the labeling process.

For reasons of privacy and personal safety, all names of participants used in this thesis have been changed to protect their identities. The names of organizations have also been changed with the exception of *Young Han Woori* and *PSCORE*, the leaders of these groups acquiesced to have the real names used, and Hanawon, a government run education and settlement centre that is already relatively well known to the public.

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[1] 국어의 로마자 표기법

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_Romanization_of_Korean

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Purpose of study:

I was promised that if I worked for three years, they would give me money and I would be helped to go to America or South Korea. It wasn't easy for me and at first I didn't even know how to use a computer. My friend told the owner she didn't want to work there so he sold her to a Chinese man. My friend and I wanted to kill ourselves. Then another woman working with us was sold, that's when I realized, "Ah, we are not even humans." The owner of the internet chatting business told us, "If you don't do what I tell you, I'll sell you too." I was terrified. I decided I had to leave, I decided to go to South Korea.

A man with whom I had often chatted while working and who was always asking to meet in person told me he would help me. He was in South Korea but promised he would come to North East China to help me escape. I was so depressed at that time, I had lost all my friends, everyone I was close to had gone, it was so hard to believe this man when he offered me a way out. I told him I didn't need his help, but he insisted, telling me he would come to China. On the date that we had decided to meet I was able to get away from the house where we were made to work like beasts. I hadn't told anyone that I was leaving for fear of being caught. I didn't take anything with me, leaving in the night wearing only my slippers. To my surprise, the man with whom I had chatted all those times was there waiting for me. He had brought me a fake passport and I was so overwhelmed I couldn't stop crying. It was as if rain had finally fallen on a desert, [3] I was 19 years old. [4] The man who helped me had paid 30 million won to aid in my escape; he was from Gyeong-gi Province in South Korea.

I travelled to Thailand and, traversing mountains and rivers, I made it into Myanmar where I was arrested and put in jail. On the walls of the rat infested jail cell, previous occupants had scrawled things like, "I am from XX in North Korea, I was caught trying to go to South Korea." At that time I didn't know if I would live or die.[5] In prison I met a pastor who helped us with interpreting. I was lucky, I think, I was only in jail for a month before I was allowed to go to South Korea.

I was so excited to arrive in South Korea, but this soon turned to disappointment as we were yelled and sworn at by the government handlers when we arrived. It was as if we were the Jewish prisoners you see in [Second World War] movies. We were interrogated for two months to find out if we were spies or not, following this we were moved to Hanawon[6] and our education began. In Hanawon I learnt a lot of things that shocked me. Everything I had learned about Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il was a lie,

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[3] 그때 도망치던 느낌은 마치 사막에서 물을 만난 느낌 같았어요.

[4] Korean age 19, foreign age 18.

[5] For a period of one month, on a daily basis, Jin-hee Park was asked where she was from, what school she had attended and if she could describe the buildings in her area. It was also demanded that she sing North Korean songs and offer other evidence that she was indeed North Korean, not a spy, and not an ethnic Korean-Chinese.

[6] More research on the relationships formed in Hanawon would be helpful in identifying the starting point and the nature of many relationships formed. In interviews with talbukin, however, most explained that they had not maintained the relationships started in Hanawon.

> everything I had believed for 20 years fell apart.[7]
>
> Finally, after three months, the time came to leave the centre, I couldn't wait to leave, to eat what I wanted to eat, live the way I wanted to live…but I was alone. Others had family, some had friends, but I had no one. It saddened me greatly and I didn't know what to do. A nun who worked at Hanawon took me by the hand and led me out of the centre; she offered to take me to a home for young girls such as myself, who had no family in South Korea. I didn't trust her,[8] and I wanted to escape, but I went with her anyway. This was not the life I had wanted. That was late 2009, when I moved into the girl's home (Interview with Jin-hee Park: arrived South Korea 2009).

Jin-hee Park never intended to leave her family, friends and hometown forever. But after crossing into China from Yang-gang Province, North Korea, her plans to leave for a short time to make some money turned sour when she was coerced into a form of internet based prostitution run by a Chinese man and his North Korean wife. As the above vignette demonstrates, arrival in South Korea was not the fairytale ending she had envisioned. On the contrary, it marked another stage of hardship for Jin-hee, as she settled into a foreign environment surrounded by strangers. Through the kindness of these strangers, however, she made close friends in the girl's group home, friends whom she now counts as family. Two years later, Jin-hee is still adapting, this time to life at a South Korean university. Dreams of escape from exploitation have turned into dreams of studying English in the United States. Jin-hee still misses her family in North Korea greatly, but her life has been made easier through the people she has met and the support networks that have grown through the Catholic Church, the group home and the various groups that she attends.

What happens to those such as Jin-hee who are not fortunate enough to make it across the border(s) with a mother or father, or sibling? Not all are lucky enough to be taken into a group home from the beginning of their stay in South Korea. Data from extensive studies confirm that cases of depression, psychological distress and family breakdown are disproportionately high among the talbukin[9] population (Haggard and Noland 2011, Jung 2009, Kim 2007, Yi et al. 2006, 2009). These problems arise both from extensive periods of time spent hiding in

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[7] Jin-hee recounted that, "When I was in North Korea, we were so proud of being North Korean and always trusted in Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. When I was crossing the Amok River into China, I was so scared but I had my Kim Il Sung badge with me and I swore to him that I would return to North Korea. I never meant to betray my country. Then in Hanawon, we learnt that Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il are bad people. I was so confused. They had been like Gods to me, now, it was all gone."

[8] I was told by Jin-hee that in North Korea people are told that Nuns are criminals and not to be trusted.

[9] "Talbukin" refers to people who have defected from North Korea and made their way, usually through China, to South Korea. "Tal" means "escape", "Buk" means "north", and "in" means "person". The explanation for why this word is used to describe these people is offered further on in this thesis.

unstable, dangerous conditions in China and difficulty adapting to life in South Korea. Some of those whom I interviewed had managed to maintain some contact with family in North Korea, usually by means of mobile phones smuggled across the border.[10] For a majority, however, the closest they could get to establishing contact was to use *Google Earth* to gaze down upon their family home in North Korea. Feelings of isolation and the difficulties experienced while adapting to life in South Korea are the main issues voiced by talbukin interviewed for this thesis.

Through semi-structured interviews and participant observation in households and communities, and both secular and non-secular settings, this thesis explores how talbukin actively 'manufacture' pseudo kinship networks through informal and formal methods; from structured, independent and government sponsored lectures and church groups to the everyday actions of meeting together, sharing stories, songs and memories. Furthermore, this thesis offers insight into how particular mnemonic devices are employed during the 'manufacturing' process to create salient continuities of memory, connections to a time and place that has become both geographically and temporally out of reach. For people who might otherwise be without a past, and individuals who might otherwise be alone, particular tools of memory play a powerful role in creating a bridge to the past and contributing to feelings of solidarity in the present. From these feelings of solidarity between talbukin, it is possible to observe the gradual emergence of a community whose identity is rooted in a shared feeling of loss, but also a communal hope for the reunification of the two Koreas.

1.2 Data collection

Contact with the participants of this study can be loosely divided into four periods, beginning in early 2009, when I was asked by a friend to do some volunteer English teaching at an organization in Seoul that specialized in working with young people from multicultural backgrounds. These were usually children of South Korean men and Southeast Asian women. They would have trouble at school with maths or English, or in some cases they simply needed a place to study after school. Either way, their parents had deemed it prudent to allow them to attend the special tutorials offered by South Korean university students and the

[10] During one interview for this thesis the interviewee, a girl living in Seoul without her family, explained to me that it was relatively simple for her to contact her parents in North Korea. She had paid to have a mobile phone smuggled to her family. To demonstrate, she punched some digits into her smart phone and, with eyes lighting up, asked me if I would like to greet her mother in North Korea.

cultural presentations given by some foreign volunteers. There were also, however, young people who had come from North Korea and were interested in benefitting from the various supplementary education programmes the organization offered. My curiosity was aroused and I arranged to meet the director of the organization. I was informed that what was required would be very informal, simply speaking to whoever turned up about my country and culture. I prepared a short presentation in English and Korean on New Zealand. For several weeks half a dozen talbukin between the ages of 17-22 attended the presentations. We would talk about our countries and cultures and share a light meal. The meetings would last between 1-2 hours each time. This represented my initial contact with talbukin.

The second period of my involvement with the talbukin community began at the end of 2009, when I found myself involved with several other similar organizations, also working out of Seoul. I had heard about these organizations through a talbukin friend I had met at the cultural presentations. He explained to me that unlike the previously mentioned organization, these organizations were devoted entirely to the task of promoting mutual understanding between talbukin and South Koreans, and facilitating adaptation for the new arrivals.

For a period of two years I taught English one-to-one, helped with editing English newsletters and assisted at special events related to talbukin. Special events included a "Democracy Camp" and cultural events organized by Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This camp, and other cultural events organized by these NGOs were attended by talbukin, South Koreans and foreigners from various countries including Australia, China, the United Kingdom and the United States. During this time I was fortunate to meet many helpful individuals who in turn introduced me to others involved in the field of social work and/or talbukin related issues.

Further to my volunteer work with several NGOs, I was invited into the homes of some talbukin I had met in the organizations, and encouraged to attend Saturday morning lectures. These lectures were held in a study room on the outskirts of Seoul and attracted an audience of 20-25 people each week, all North Korean refugees with the exception of the speakers, who were usually South Korean academics or business people. Lectures were given on a range of topics such as, "How to dress well for a job interview", and, "The origins of the Korean War". At these lectures I met more people who invited me to attend a reformed Protestant church in Seoul. Religious organizations in South Korea play an important role in both facilitating the movement of North Korean refugees from

North Korea, into China and on to South Korea, and expediting the settlement process through offering 'readymade networks' and financial aid to those in need.

At the beginning of 2011, I began attending "X Church" at the invitation of a talbukin friend. My attendance at this church in Seoul coincided with what I consider to have been the third stage of my fieldwork. Here I was introduced to more young men and women from North Korea as well as the people who worked with them. Sunday service was attended by over 100 members each week, a mixture of talbukin and South Koreans. I was made a member of a bible study group which met each Sunday after service. Four female talbukin and three South Koreans made up our bible study group.

This was the most intensive period of participant observation as I made efforts to involve myself in NGOs, churches and social activities in which there was a large talbukin contingent. It was at this stage that I was invited by a young man to live in the spare room of his two room apartment on the outskirts of Seoul. Woo-sung Lee had been in South Korea for six years, previously living with his family in North Korea before he decided to cross the border into China and travel on to South Korea. In exchange for a roof over my head I promised to speak English to him whenever we were in the house. He also agreed to introduce me to the people he knew and the organizations he was part of. I lived with Woo-sung for almost seven months and over that time I developed a strong relationship with Woo-sung and several other talbukin he introduced me to. With Woo-sung's help I was to become a regular fixture at the meetings of several organizations. During this time I also attended several other churches with a notable talbukin congregation. This gave me a chance to both meet other North Korean refugees and observe them in a spiritual environment other than the one I had already been participating in.

The fourth and what I deem to be the final stage of my research, involved semi-structured interviews with 14 talbukin and three South Koreans. While continuing to participate in NGOs and social events I solicited help from several talbukin with whom I developed close relations to give a voice to my research and offer clarity regarding the experiences of North Koreans living in South Korea. Key informants introduced me to organizations where I met others with whom I also developed a strong rapport. The majority of the talbukin I interviewed I had met through church or NGO organizations. The South Koreans whom I interviewed were working in organizations that handle talbukin related issues; this included one North Korean human rights organization and several NGOs focusing on facilitating the settlement of young talbukin into South Korean society.

Interviews were conducted in quiet places, usually, for the sake of convenience, in cafes or private spaces at universities. They were about an hour long and included 15 minutes for the participant to construct a "bio-sketch", in which he/she broke down the time since leaving North Korea into several time periods, according to their own wishes, and explained from whom, during each period, they obtained the most help and in what form this help was offered.

Following the bio-sketch the interview continued in a standard question-answer format. The interview was broken down into three sections; the first section entitled "Meeting patterns" focused on explicating the day to day social patterns of talbukin, including eating patterns and the daily schedule. The second section, "Family, friends and co-operation", contained questions aimed at gleaning a clearer understanding of the nature of the relationships being formed by talbukin living in South Korea, such as: with whom are talbukin making friends? How often and in what context do they meet these people? Do they confide in their new friends the secrets of their origins? The third and final section was entitled "Security and Comfort". Questions here were designed to elicit descriptions of the difficulties that the participants faced living in South Korea, who they would contact in an emergency and how they felt about their lives in their new home. Interviews were accompanied by a consent form which laid out the aim of the research and the rights of the participant and were recorded with this consent being obtained beforehand. No financial benefits or rewards were offered to participants, although, if interviews were held in a cafe, I would purchase a coffee for myself and my interviewee.

In addition to the interview process, in late 2011 I travelled to North East China to undertake research into the transnational aspects of the ethnic Korean community. During this time I lived with an ethnic Korean-Chinese family in the province of Jilin. I took time to get to know the area and was invited to several family events, during which I would ask questions on issues related to Korean identity as it is understood by Koreans living in China. My time in the ethnic Korean community opened my eyes to the transnational Korean diaspora and the connections that exist from North Korea, through China and into South Korea.

It is important to consider that my fieldwork, the process of data collection, and my relationships with both North Korean refugees and ethnic Koreans in China, were all influenced by my presence. Prior to beginning my study of North Korean refugees and Korean kinship I had spent a year and a half studying Korean and reading intensively on Korea, its culture and history. This knowledge

provided me with an essential foundation for interacting with Koreans, wherever they were from. While my language skills and understanding of Korean customs were useful tools, it was my transient lifestyle and long term separation from my family that was a point over which I could develop more intimate relationships with informants. I felt a sense of communion in our shared outsider status; we would share stories about the difficulties we had living in South Korea, often finding more common ground than points of difference. It is also important to consider the privileged position I hold in Korean society, being a white, English speaking male. This undoubtedly contributed to making positive first impressions and establishing contacts with both talbukin and South Koreans. Hailing from New Zealand also helped, I believe, in asserting my neutrality in regards to the turbulent history of the region and the ambiguity felt by Koreans towards foreign powers. Questions would often take the form of, "Do you speak English in New Zealand? New Zealand, isn't that in Northern Europe?" And, "I want to learn English, can you tutor me?" I was an outsider, this was clear, but I was also an outsider who was willing to lend a hand and who, from the point of view of the many talbukin I worked with, cared about their situation and was willing to listen. I also became knowledgeable about the various organizations that worked with North Korean refugees; I would direct talbukin who had recently arrived in South Korea to the organizations offering free English tutoring and the language schools that gave the most generous discounts.

1.3 Characteristics of the participants

I met the majority of North Korean refugees at organizations in Seoul, South Korea. The people I worked with and with whom I conducted interviews were a diverse group but with several overriding similarities. Most of them had come from the northern border areas of North Korea, North Ham-gyeong Province or Yang-gang Province.[11] Most of these had also spent more than six months in China before travelling through Southeast Asia and on to South Korea. Because I tended to associate with people and groups around my own age, most people with whom I spent time were in the 19-35 year age bracket. Furthermore, many with whom I worked and who I interviewed were females, reflecting the gender bias of defecting North Koreans in the last ten years. An article in the 2011 autumn edition of *Korea Focus* reported that, "Women account for 80 percent of all defectors and 70 percent of the female defectors are in their 20s and 40s…"

11 함경북도. 양강도.

(Kim. Korea Focus: Autumn 2011: 12). Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland offer similar figures, stating that, "Females account for more than three-quarters of North Koreans entering South Korea" (Haggard and Noland: 20). Although I tended to rely on "snowball" techniques to meet new people and recruit interview subjects, I believe that the group with whom I spent my field work time and conducted interviews reflects the demographics of incoming North Koreans over the last 5-10 years. English language ability, or lack thereof, was not a contributing factor with regard to those I worked with, as interviews and volunteer work was, for the most part, conducted in Korean. However, I did notice that I developed deeper friendships with people with whom I shared a bi-lingual relationship.[12]

Although these factors largely determined the characteristics of the participants, I also used certain criteria to shape the boundaries of those with whom I wished to work, looking primarily to gauge the ideas of those who had come without family, or whose family had joined them at a later stage. The most important factor in all of this was achieving an understanding of how North Korean refugees created and maintained emotionally and instrumentally beneficial relationships. Not long into my fieldwork I realised that it was mostly younger people who were attending the organisations where I was conducting field work. The more senior North Korean refugees would tend to associate only with each other, making it difficult for me to spend time in their groups. This discovery was not surprising to me, Korean society as a whole tending to be highly stratified along age and gender lines. Nazli Kibria notes, in regards to her field work with the Vietnamese-American community in Philadelphia, "The personal social networks of individuals reflected not only their kinship ties and neighbourhood of residence but also age, gender, and social class background" (Kibria 1993: 78). Certainly, I noticed particular commonalities of residence, age and gender in regards to those with whom I worked.

The end result, I believe, was a sample that shared some important characteristics with the current trends in migration from North Korea to South Korea:

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[12] In a fascinating article that highlights the differences among North Korean refugees, Professor Byung-Ho Chung (2008) explains, "North Koreans in South Korea are not a homogenous group. They are men and women of all ages from diverse regional, occupational and class backgrounds. Accordingly, their motivations for leaving North Korea and their adaptation patterns to South Korea are also diverse. Once they arrive in South Korea, however, all of them are treated equally as "escapees" or "new settlers".

The Characteristics of Talbukin Interviewed for this Thesis

Average Age of Respondents	Gender Distribution		Areas of Origin	Years of Arrival
27 Years	Male: 6	Female: 8	North Ham-gyeong Province:9 South Ham-gyeong Province:2 Yang-gang Province:2 South Hwang-hae Province:1	2000-2005: 5 2005-2010: 9

Participants of the study were mainly students at tertiary institutions in South Korea. They were also residents of Seoul, the capital of South Korea. It is important here to note the key differences in the experiences of North Korean refugees in Seoul and other large metropolitan areas in South Korea, compared to those in the rural areas. Prior to leaving Hanawon, North Korean refugees are required to list the top three destinations in South Korea in which they would like to live. The South Korean government then allocates them apartments at a reduced rent in one of the areas closest to their wish list. As the majority of newcomers have tended to opt for Seoul as their first choice, it has become rarer for the government to grant this option. The result is that although the majority of North Korean refugees reside in urban areas, there are also a number living in rural areas of South Korea.

Following the literature review, chapter two of this thesis will situate the migration of North Korean refugees in an historical context and discuss the various tenets of what constitutes the talbukin community. This includes NGOs, church groups, social groups and areas of residence. This chapter will then offer a brief discussion on reading the talbukin community as one growing apart from South Korean society, while chapter three will investigate the ways in which talbukin manufacture kinship. This includes a closer look at the dynamics of the various groups and moments of significance during the social network building process; chapter four will explicate the importance of memory in creating solidarity between individuals; chapter five will discuss the future of the talbukin community and will also include a brief explication of the transnational aspects of North Korean social networks.

1.4 Theoretical background and literature review

In discussing how North Korean refugees create pseudo kinship, two complimentary theoretical nets shall be cast over the research findings– aspects of

kinship theory and the anthropology of memory. So as to better organize this section it is broken into three parts; the first part discusses texts relating to aspects of kinship theory, deriving primarily from the work of Janet Carsten; the second section examines theories developed by scholars in the field of the anthropology of memory. These will be broached in relation to the growing talbukin community; finally, several useful texts on North Korean refugees will be looked at with regards to their value as background texts.

1.4. (1) Kinship

For the purposes of this thesis, one of the most difficult tasks was to distinguish pseudo kinship from ordinary friendship and/or community as it is commonly known. It has proved extremely challenging to assert that one relationship is an ordinary friendship, while another is a fictive kinship relationship. There is no linear progression on which we can chart the transition of a relationship from strangers to acquaintances to friendship and on to pseudo kinship– this simply does not exist and it could be unwise to assume these states as mutually distinct categories. Given that there is no clear boundary demarcating where friendship ends and fictive kinship begins, and that there is a danger of making assumptions regarding the nature of the relationships we see, it could be tempting to avoid this conundrum entirely. To feign ignorance of this complex issue would, however, be doing an injustice to the comments I heard while conducting field work, non-ambiguous remarks such as “She is my sister, we are like family to each other”, and other more subtle expressions of intimacy such as, “I care about her, I have known her for a long time and she is important to me”. It would be to turn a blind eye to the physical expressions of intimacy that existed between some individuals– the stroking of hair between friends, locked arms and clasped hands. It would be to ignore the times I heard advice being exchanged on how to navigate the minefield that is a capitalist, high-tech and often unforgiving society. It would also, and perhaps most importantly, undervalue the weight of particular obligations that exist between individuals, a heaviness that is felt in regards to others which means relationships can never be treated lightly. This is particularly important when we consider individuals who are alone in South Korea. This represents a different kind of intimacy, invested feelings in relationships that are neither friend nor family, in relationships that have long lasting, emotional significance. This thesis does not claim that, “Because we say we are family, we are family”. The idiom of family is so powerful in Korea and far more complex than enunciating ties of relatedness and the proclamation becoming a reality. To accept such simple cause-and-effect explanations would be to seek out the answers to particular questions and ignore the agency of talbukin in deciding whether or

not to be a part of groups and whether or not to engage with others. Rather, this thesis claims that for many talbukin who are without blood ties in South Korea, relationships that are created and nurtured over time come to play a vital material and psychological role in their lives, extending social reach and providing emotional comfort.

The existence of deep emotional feelings between individuals, anchored by trust, which itself develops over a long period of time, allow individuals to feel a sense of dependence upon one another. This mutually experienced and profound emotional dependence, created concomitantly with formal and informal obligations, means that the relationships of some individuals can be considered as more than simple social networks, but rather as processual, 'pseudo-kinship ties'.

> Since its establishment as a specialized branch of scholarship in the first half of this century, the study of kinship has undergone noticeable changes in its theoretical orientation. They reflect a general theoretical and epistemological shift in anthropology which parallels the paradigm which is observed in science generally…the shift from structure to process (Capron, Steindl-Rast and Matus 1991. Quoted in Holy 1997: 3)

Processual relatedness, in contrast to consanguine or affinal ties, is a concept that gained favour following David Schneider's *A Critique of the Study of* Kinship (1984). In contrast to the vertical kinship models which critics such as Schneider argued were imbued with a Western bias and accepted as universally true (Holy. 1997), British scholar Janet Carsten focused on how people construct relatedness through every day practice, arguing that, "Kinship may be viewed as given by birth and unchangeable or it may be seen as shaped by the ordinary, everyday activities of family life" (Carsten 2004: 6). It is important to understand relationships as those who live the relationships view them. It is not a case of disregarding the importance of consanguine ties, rather, we should ask how do people themselves construct relatedness and what meanings do these relationships hold for individuals? It is important to show how kinship is ingrained in the fabric of people's lives. Carsten's approach is extremely useful when looking at the experiences of North Koreans in South Korea. For many North Korean refugees the settlement process is long and difficult, in particular for those who arrive in South Korea without family members. For many talbukin, in leaving their homes and families north of the border and travelling to South Korea, the fabric of their lives– kinship– is torn. Family and all blood-based networks are sundered**.** Starting again in South Korea requires rebuilding networks strong enough, where possible, to compensate for the absence of familial ties.

Looking at the social network building process of talbukin in South Korea through the lens of "processual kinship" allows us to investigate the methods by which kinship is made. A focus on the everyday activities of talbukin is necessary to understand how people from North Korea make networks essential for survival and prosperity in their new homes. As is emphasized by Carsten, scholars often hesitate to focus on aspects of life that might be considered unworthy of study. The quotidian aspects of life, according to the author, are central to the kinship making process. Despite this, there is a tendency in anthropology, Carsten laments, "to concentrate on the seemingly exotic and bizarre. Everyday spaces and activities are ignored because we assume we know their meaning" (ibid 22). Bearing in mind the significance of the internal world and the importance of even small actions, exchanges, and other, various everyday behaviour it is necessary that all aspects of life, the so-called public and private spaces, are given equal attention in regards to their wider political implications.

Constructing relatedness, as argued in this thesis in regards to talbukin living in South Korea, takes place through social activities. Domestic arrangements, such as those between talbukin living in government allocated housing and socialising with each other on a regular basis, must be given equal weighting, analytically speaking, with the public political-jural aspects. This thesis highlights the multifaceted nature of kinship in an effort to balance a lop-sided view that had previously side-lined such knowledge.

Charles Stafford (2000), points out that anthropology has tended to divide the study of Chinese kinship into lineage group-focused work, and the informal business of everyday life. The latter aspects have been largely excluded from studies of kinship. Stafford looks to rectify this oversight, turning his eye to cycles of reciprocity and the associated productions of relatedness in an effort to underline the manufactured nature of kinship in China.

Lambert (2000), in the same volume, continues the emphasis on sentiment and substance, shining a light on northern Indian forms of relatedness. As with Stafford, Lambert notes a tendency in anthropology to have examined Indian kinship through the narrow lens of conventional considerations of relatedness. The author aims to move away from biology-based views of kinship, looking at how kinship in northern India is associated with a flow of substance, such as the movement of food and drink as gifts between people, and the concomitant expressions of emotion. The work of both Stafford and Lambert offer pertinent examples of how kinship is manufactured, and are a particularly useful starting

point for understanding the significance of gift giving and exchange in the network building process of talbukin. Small actions and commensurality are key components of how relations are created and maintained for North Koreans in South Korea. This necessitates both notable pecuniary and temporal investment and, therefore, a high degree of sociability.

The talbukin community is "Awash with kinship connections" (Carsten 2000: 135), and certainly not limited to the groups which individuals attend. The majority of these ties lie dormant until activated in times of need. Activation of connections is often concomitant with 'acting' like a relative. Physical intimacy between individuals, whether in the form of holding hands while walking together, locked arms while sitting at a meeting or brushing another's hair, is also a significant part of building and maintaining intimate ties between individuals.

Carsten's *After Kinship* (2004) aimed to tackle questions of kinship while taking into account aspects of gender and personhood. In this text the author explores what happens when it is no longer taken for granted that kinship is given at birth. In other words, how does a focus on the fluid, constructed nature of kinship change how we look at ourselves and others? This text is pertinent to studies of kinship as it offers concrete examples of processual, manufactured kinship. Furthermore, the concepts included in *After Kinship* and the Carsten texts that came before offer a useful lens through which to view the actions of talbukin as much more than simple networking. If we consider Carsten's argument regarding fluid kinship relations and the choices and varieties that occur as people make kinship on an everyday basis, it is possible to view the lived experiences of talbukin in South Korea as creating kinship and extending survival networks required to navigate the South Korean social milieu. These relationships are built over time and are rooted in deep feelings of trust and mutual dependence that go beyond friendship.

This thesis continues the use of Carsten's expression 'manufacturing kinship' in order to acknowledge the intense labour that is a part of making pseudo kin relations. Time, money and emotions are all invested in the development of relationships that, for those who are without family support, are vital for adapting to their environment. This relationship labour is discussed by Barbara Bodenhorn in regards to Inupiat of Alaska, "The work of being related– rather than the labour of giving birth or the 'fact' of shared substances…marks out the kinship sphere [for the Inupiat]…and it is hard work. Having to construct and reconstruct one's social world virtually on a daily basis can be stressful stuff" (Carsten 2000: 143). The relationships of talbukin do not maintain themselves,

rather, it is required that individuals 'feed' their networks on a continual basis. This form of kinship creation allows for the incorporation of newcomers to the group and facilitates social reproduction of the community.

Korean kinship too, it can be said, has been repeatedly put under the microscope by kinship specialists applying the analytical lens of genealogical theory, which takes as its starting point the significance for those studied of consanguine and affinal ties (Janelli 1982[13], Kim 2003, Lee 1997). Song-Chul Kim explains that, "Research on Korean kinship has concentrated on the local lineages and anthropologists have formulated a paradigm of Korean lineage on the basis of Chinese and African lineage systems" (Kim 2003: 147). Kim's proposition that studies of Korean kinship might also consider, "What people actually "do" with kinship, and regard individuals as the primary agents of kinship activities" (ibid. 153), appears to offer a new, flexible approach to Korean kinship studies and yet, Kim seems unable to follow his own advice, ending up with a distanced view of what the people are "actually doing". The problem is that, as with these other studies of kinship, a vertical kinship model has been employed to interpret what was happening in Korean kinship. There has continued to be a focus on ties which extend on a vertical axis from ancestors to the living and from the living on to their descendants. This thesis attempts to employ a horizontal kinship plane, an analytical approach which highlights the practice of individuals– as Bourdieu (1977) would have understood it– and the fluid, mutable aspects of relatedness.

Without understating the importance of heretofore produced scholarship in the field of Korean kinship studies, this thesis approaches the subject of Korean kinship by looking at North Korean refugees living in South Korea and analysing how these individuals create a processual, mutable relatedness amongst each other and with South Koreans. This thesis aims to do what Kim declared was required of Korean kinship studies– to look at the practice of individuals and explore how Koreans themselves, or in this case North Koreans living in South Korea, produce relationships which, although forever assigned the label "fictive kinship", are for all intents and purposes a form of relatedness as yet unexplored.

The work of Ju-hee Kim has been extremely useful in offering an understanding of how Koreans create social networks that have both instrumental and emotional value. In *The Human Relations of Pumasi and Jeong*[14] (1992), Kim investigates the nature of social relations in a Korean village. This thesis explores 'Pumasi',

[13]조상의례와 한국사회 / 로저 L. 자넬리 ; 임돈희 공저 ; 김성철 역

[14] 품앗이와 정의 인간관계

the idea that, between people there exist a multitude of relations predicated on particular formal and informal acts which fulfil unspoken mutual obligations. These relationships, existing between immediate family, extended family, friends and neighbours ensure that mutual material and non-material aid is forthcoming when required.[15] At the root of these relations is the concept of *jeong*. Jeong, a concept made up of two smaller emotional abstracts– love/affection and intimacy/friendship– acts to bind people together and ensure ongoing, mutually fulfilling relations between villagers. These relationships are built and renewed through giving, receiving and repayment of debts. Pumasi, according to Kim, refers to equality and reciprocity and includes elements of goodwill and benevolence (Kim 1992).

The existence of jeong between individuals raises the significance of a relationship, distinguishing it from other, mundane social relations. Often commented on by talbukin with whom I spoke was their feeling that, "In South Korea, people have no jeong." This is in contrast to North Korea, where, according to those same individuals, people have jeong for each other and these feelings of intimacy make relationships within the talbukin community more genuine than those existing in the wider society. This concept is especially significant when considering the relationships being formed between North Korean refugees. As with the relations observed by Kim, it is clear that over time, through frequent meetings and the continued exchange of material and non-material articles, a sense of jeong is gradually created between talbukin.

1.4. (2) Memory and community

The second theoretical element I will introduce here is that of the correlation between memory and community. How is memory significant to people who arrive in a new environment with no way to return, those for whom the past is a topic better whispered between trusted friends than discussed openly in front of strangers? What aspects of memory and the remembering process can be applied to how talbukin reconnect with the past and build community in the present?

People use images of the present selectively and communally to reconstruct the past. The process of remembering, according to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), is a process of making the past from the present and the present, from the past. Human memory is made in a communal environment, in other words, people

[15] For a further example of the significance of pumasi in Korean culture, see Sorensen's (1988) detailed account of Korean rural life in *Over the Mountains are Mountains*.

require other people to remember. This is made salient when considering the North Korean community in South Korea and the group remembering process which takes place in each meeting. People who share elements of the same narrative are able to contribute to building a past which in turn informs their present. Memory, however, is selective, with sections deleted and added according to the person making the memories and the situation in which the memories are made.

Appeals to the importance of memory, in regards to the relationship between memory and kinship, is significant to the study of the North Korean refugee community in South Korea. “From the moment that a family is augmented by a new member, it reserves a place for him or her in its thought” (Halbwachs 1992:70). The making of family is undeniably informed by remembering and the selection of particular memories that serve to promote solidarity between community members.

Our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past; the present, therefore, is experienced differently according to each person’s previous experiences. Discussion of memory through the lens of community is helpful for understanding how the talbukin community builds memories acceptable to the developing identity of the group. The communal process of creating a “socially legitimate currency of memories” (Connerton 1989: 3) which forms the group narrative, binds individuals from North Korea together in a similar way as the sharing of secrets strengthens a friendship. The coming together of people for whatever purpose, be it a bible study group or book club meeting, inevitably includes a time of informal exchange, during which particular mnemonic devices prompt discussion of life prior to defection. These memories, Paul Connerton elucidates, “Are pieces of a puzzle which, when applied with memories of others complete the identity of the community” (ibid: 40). “Re-membering”, is a process by which groups invoke particular common histories and omit others and is particular to each community. The production of specific narratives defines the character of the community created, and its relationship to the outside world. This process of re-membering can clearly be seen in the sites in which North Koreans living in South Korea form relationships.

For talbukin, memories are crucial to maintaining a sense of self and a connection to a time prior to leaving their homes in North Korea. Memory serves as a basis for the talbukin community, contributing towards the development of a community of memory. Jacob Climo and Maria Cattell (2002) explore the significance of memory as a foundation of the self and society, stressing that, “Without it

[memory] there can be no self, no identity. Without memory, the world would cease in any meaningful way, as it does for persons with amnesia" (Cattell and Climo 2002: 1). In discussions of the concepts pertinent to the community building practices of talbukin, songs, ceremonies, language, places and things are all deemed as significant sites of memory. Memory and identity, according to Cattell and Climo are inextricably linked, with individual and communal identity being made in an ongoing process of self-construction. For the talbukin community, as with other peoples, "The past thus serves as the basis for social cohesion among groups...[creating] the illusion of consensus" (ibid: 36). Through bodily practices of memory, bridges between the individual and the collective, and the past and the present are created.

Several other concepts discussed in this text are relevant for looking at how talbukin maintain links with the past and create community in the present; co-remembering and the importance of shared memory to developing and sustaining relationships; "un-remembering", silences and forgetting, memory as the foundation for identity, and mnemonic tools which act as sites of memory. A key element as yet unmentioned is that of the relationship between food and memory.

The connection between food, eating and remembering is of great interest when used to understand the talbukin community and identity making process. David Sutton explains, "Food can hide powerful meanings and structures under the cloak of the mundane and the quotidian" (Sutton 2002: 3). Indeed, it is the mundane actions of cooking, serving and sharing food that act as mnemonic devices, triggering memories of times prior to arrival in South Korea. Food, as a technology of memory, is an integral part of the process of remembering, a process which, when engaged in communally, allows for the creation of ties between individuals where none previously existed and contributes to the formation of a group identity. Identity for North Korea refugees living in South Korea "Is not composed of a fixed set of memories but lies in the dialectical, ceaseless activity of remembering and forgetting, assimilating and discarding" (ibid: 9). The activities associated with food preparation and consumption are a highly relevant part of community creation for North Koreans living in South Korea. Expressions of remembering are made most salient in the cases of persons, such as North Korean refugees, for whom narratives of the self have been disrupted by migration, or who have suffered the trauma of forced eviction from home lands due to conflict. For these people memories are often the only connection to life prior to entering South Korea.

This thesis will shed light on the importance of "group-remembering" for talbukin.

Throughout my time working with North Korean refugee groups it came to my attention that particular moments encouraged group-remembering of a time before entering South Korea. Furthermore, the existence or absence of particular material objects do indeed act to trigger recollections of life in China or in North Korea thus facilitating the making and remaking of a distinct group identity based on memories of the past.

1.4. (3) The North Korean refugee question

Moving away from a discussion of kinship and memory it is also useful to discuss key texts explaining the background of North Koreans who leave their homes and make the difficult journey through China to South Korea. Haggard and Noland's *Eyewitness to Transformation: Refugee Insights into North Korea* (2011) provides a good starting point for such discussion. Through extensive interviews with North Korean refugees living in China and talbukin living in South Korea, Haggard and Noland seek to understand the reason for the growing numbers of North Koreans choosing to leave their country on a permanent basis. Key questions include, why and how do the refugees leave? To what extent are they motivated by political as well as economic considerations? And, who are the refugees? Findings describe a detailed demographic of the type of person leaving North Korea, the various perils associated with refugee life, and further evidence of the severe psychological stress suffered by the pressures of refugee life in China (Haggard and Noland 2011: 19). Further to providing a more 'human' side to the experiences of North Korean refugees, the authors illuminate the importance of networks in both aiding the exodus from North Korea, ensuring safe shelter while in China and assisting with movement to a third country.

Underpinning a great deal of the statistical interpretations used by Haggard and Noland is the work of Soon-Hyung Lee et al. In their 2007 text entitled, *The Social and Psychological Acculturation of North Korean Defector Families*[16], the authors present a detailed, interview- derived quantitative and qualitative understanding of the psychological stresses suffered by North Korean refugees. While Haggard and Noland have focused on the process of defection, Lee et al. turn their attention to the acculturation process. Utilizing both interviews and survey data, the authors look at the 'resilience' of North Koreans in South Korea, including everyday life adjustment problems and how North Korean refugees themselves interpret their experiences. This text is a useful tool for providing

[16] *탈북 가족의 적응과 심리적 통합*

raw data and deeper understandings of the adaptation process of North Koreans living in South Korea.

Soon-Hyung Yi et al. (2009) continues in a similar vein, offering an in-depth understanding of the effect that defection from North Korea, time spent in China and entry into South Korean society has on the North Korean family. In addition to highlighting the destructive effects of the migration process on the North Korean family unit, the authors detail the finer differences between the North Korean and the South Korean family, in itself valuable background knowledge to aid understanding of the challenges that await North Koreans who resettle in South Korea. There are many ways in which individuals and families themselves cope with the extreme challenges that are part of a new life in South Korea. Coping strategies in this case include marriage as a strategy for women while in China and remarriage upon arrival in South Korea (Yi et al. 2009: 5). Yi et al. and Jeong (2009),[17] get to the core of one of the main issues plaguing young talbukin who leave China alone and make their way south without family, investigating the psychological and physical stresses exacted upon individuals before and after arriving in South Korea. It is important to have an understanding of the support systems required for an individual to develop a sense of stability in their new home and combat the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The texts discussed above offer a sound analytical starting point from which to view the lives of North Korean refugees in South Korea and are essential for painting an accurate, contemporary picture of how North Koreans reach South Korea and what happens following their arrival. For the purposes of this thesis, the texts discussed in this literature review offer the comprehensive coverage required for both the theoretical and historical aspects of the case of talbukin living in South Korea.

[17] *현대 탈북자 문제의 이해*

Chapter Two: Seoul city and the talbukin community

> It is necessary to understand that we are dealing with people who have been completely uprooted from their familiar surroundings and who have to start their lives over from the beginning. The backwardness of North Korea in terms of level of education and development, as well as traumatic experiences, might contribute to the feelings of isolation (*NKHR Briefing Report No.5*. 2011).

Korean kinship, rooted in Confucian ideals and encompassing notions of filial piety and ancestor worship, has been temporally ruptured since the fratricidal conflict of 1950-1953. The conflict split the country politically and physically, which resulted in families being separated and scattered throughout the peninsula and beyond. The dispersal of the Korean people and separation of families and family members during and following the conflict has had lasting implications for the generations of Koreans that have followed. To this day, the issue of Korean divided families[18] continues to be used as an issue of negotiation between the two Koreas, with "Family reunions" staged periodically[19] as a political nod to the usually marginalized human rights issues that form part of the many political issues on the Korean peninsula.[20]

This chapter will look at the various sites in which talbukin create pseudo kinship ties. It will also examine the kind of work being done with North Korean refugees, the motivations for North Korean refugees to participate in such activities and the ways in which these sites offer environments conducive to building networks. The information in this chapter is drawn largely from fieldwork conducted over the last two and a half years in Seoul, South Korea. Sites considered in this thesis include: Non Governmental Organizations, including church affiliated and unaffiliated organizations working with North Korean refugees; Protestant and Catholic religious organizations; government sponsored lectures providing information on a variety of topics; a children's home, created and sponsored by the Catholic Church for young children from North Korea; a special home for teenage girls in South Korea without family; and a book club. The focus will then move from a macro view to discussing a particular case study from which it is possible to glean a more cogent understanding of the roles that organizations play in the lives of talbukin.

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[18] 이산가족[18]

[19] There are thought to be currently 79,258 members of divided families in South Korea. Plans are currently underway for another family reunion in early 2012. However, there is doubt this meeting will eventuate given negotiations between the two Koreas do not seem to move forward. (Daily NK. *Divided Families Still Suffering* http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00100&num=8541) 12/16/2011.

[20] For further information on Korea's divided families see Kim Kwi Ok (2004).

2.1 The historical and social context of study

The issue of separated and dispersed families has affected many, if not most Koreans.[21] The most recent expression of these divided people are the North Korean refugees fleeing their homes and making their way to South Korea, where they live as what has most recently become known as *Saeteomin*[22] or *Bukhanitaljumin*.[23] During the early stages of research for this thesis the term 'saeteomin' was used to refer to North Korean refugees. This was later changed to 'talbukja' and then finally, after consultation with several North Koreans and a person involved with North Korean human rights, to 'talbukin'.[24] It is important to note, however, that there are several labels currently employed to refer to people who have come from North Korea to live in South Korea, including 'North Korean defector, 'North Korean refugee', 'North Korean migrant', 'North Korean escapee' and 'New Settler', amongst others.[25]

> My hometown in North Korea is near the East Sea. There are four in my family, including my younger sister. I am the oldest son. As my parents are outgoing people, I was influenced by their character. My father was a public official in the Council of People's Commissars so he had to meet lots of people. My mother was also very busy all the time because she was a nurse. Thanks to my parents, I had no financial difficulties when I was young.
>
> But after 2000 there were serious difficulties in obtaining food in North Korea. So my mother had to quit her job and go to the market to get food. Not only my family but also most people could not enjoy their lives. Their only aim was to have a meal three times a day. Some of my classmates did not come to school, because they could not bring lunch. Some others had to go to the farm to help their parents instead of coming to

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[21] Kim (1988) explains that as a result of the partition of the Korean peninsula in 1945 and the devastation of the Korean War (1950-1953), an estimated five million Koreans were separated from their family members.

[22] New Settlers. (새터민)

[23] North Korean refugees/defectors (북한이탈주민)

[24] In an interview with Gyung-eun Ha from the North Korean Human Rights NGO (사단법인북한인권시민연합), I was alerted to the fact that, "The word saeteomin is not being used anymore because this word has triggered a great deal of dispute amongst the North Korean community residing in South Korea. This word means migrant, it has a very broad meaning but North Koreans do not want to be treated like other migrants from other parts of South East Asia. North Koreans have criticized the word so the government decided not to use it anymore. Gyung-eun Ha reasoned that the Korean government needs to clarify who North Koreans are, so they can decide who exactly to help, otherwise North Koreans will be classified along with other migrants.

[25] For more information on the historical and political factors involved in the labelling process of North Korean refugees see Markus Bell's (2012) article *Refugees, Defectors or Economic Migrants?* http://www.nknews.org/2012/06/refugees-defectors-and-economic-migrants/

> school. I did not really care when I was young - I thought they were starving because their parents were not faithful to the [political] party (Woo-sung Lee[26]:British Embassy blog).[27]

In the last ten years the number of North Koreans arriving in South Korea as refugees has increased dramatically (*Korea Herald Online Edition* November 2011).[28] The figures in table 1.1 offer a concrete sense of the growth in the numbers of North Koreans arriving in South Korea. The table illustrates three factors: firstly, the massive jump in the number of arrivals after 2002. Up until 2001, a total of 1,349 North Koreans had re-settled in South Korea. This figure was then surpassed each year thereafter. Furthermore, female migration, for the most part, was double and even triple that of male migration. Thirdly, it is clear that with the exception of 2005, the number of North Koreans re-settling in South Korea has continued to grow.[29]

Table 1.1 Number of North Koreans Re-settled in South Korea

Gender/Year	'98	'01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Total
Male	235	563	506	469	526	423	509	570	612	668	604	6,379
Female	71	480	632	812	1,268	960	1,509	1,974	2,197	2,259	1,819	14,028
Total	306	1,043	1,138	1,281	1,894	1,383	2,018	2,544	2,809	2,927	2,423	20,407

Unit: Persons (Source: Quoted in *Citizens´ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights*. Original source: The Ministry of Unification)

As of March 2012, the number of North Koreans arriving in South Korea surpassed 23,200 people (*Korea Herald Online Edition*. March 2012).[30] These latest refugees arriving in the South are of diverse class backgrounds and ages with a gender imbalance favouring females (Haggard and Noland 2011: 21). Few of these migrants arrive in complete parent-children families, most arrive in broken families or, in many cases, alone.

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[26] The first time an interviewee is mentioned their full name will be recorded. Subsequent occasions will not include their family name.

[27] Written for Human Rights Day 2010. Published via the British Embassy online site. http://ukinrok.fco.gov.uk/en/

[28] http://www.koreaherald.com/national/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20111116000776 "The annual number of North Korean refugees steadily increased from 2005 until 2009. It was 1,383 in 2005, 2,018 in 2006, 2,544 in 2007, 2,809 in 2008 and 2,927 in 2009, according to the Unification Ministry."

[29] Discussions with talbukin have revealed that, among younger North Korean refugees, between the ages of about 20-30 years old, there seems to be a preference for Seoul city as a place of residence. One informant told me that before she came to South Korea, South Korea and Seoul were one and the same for her, she did not know anywhere other than Seoul. She had watched South Korean dramas in North Korea and had never considered living anywhere else but the capital city. Interestingly enough, this same informant confessed to being tired of the busy lifestyle, the throngs of people and the pollution. She hoped to move to the countryside in the future. Another informant told me that she wanted to live in Seoul because of the good universities and transportation. When she drew Seoul from the 'hat' during the competition in Hanawon she was very relieved.

[30] *Young N. Korean defectors struggle to adapt.* Article written by Song Sang-ho (sshluck@heraldm.com). This article also points out that the numbers of talbukin arriving in South Korea dropped to 2,379 in 2010 when Pyongyang tightened its border control while preparing for its hereditary power succession. The figure in 2011 rebounded to 2,737.

During an interview with an ethnic Korean-Chinese woman in Jilin province, North East China,[31] I enquired as to the level of cross-border movement that was occurring at that time (late 2011) between North Korea and China. The young woman, born and brought up in the Korean Autonomously Governed province of China, explained

> Prior to 1995 there was frequent movement across the border. This ended, however, when North Koreans started to run out of food. At that time, officially, at least, border security was tightened, and movement back and forth all but halted. Unofficially, however, the number of people moving from North Korea into China, in search of food and/or a way to make money increased greatly (China field notes October 23rd 2011).

The explanation of the woman, herself with kin in both North and South Korea, accords with much of the research on the subject. A report published by the *Citizens´ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights* in February 2011, illuminates a number of theories that explain the cause of migration. Push factors, such as widespread human rights violations, hunger, economic problems, environmental disasters and war are accompanied by strong pull factors such as, "Seemingly better living conditions in other countries which draw refugees towards emigration and resettlement" (*NKHR Briefing Report No.5.* 2011: 11). Haggard and Noland offer more detail in answering the question of why more and more North Koreans have been leaving their homes and moving south, explaining that although over the years the reasons for North Koreans crossing into China has been varied, push factors generally include hunger, loss of status, frustration over lack of opportunities, political persecution and a wish to live in similar conditions to North Koreans living outside of the country. Concurrently, pull factors centre around the better living conditions in both China and South Korea. (Haggard and Noland 2011: 29-32). Migration from North Korea is not a new phenomenon; new is the strength of the push and pull factors and the resultant scale of the movement of people across the borders. Soo-min Jeong, employee at PSCORE and talbukin, offers some insight into the reasons for these changes;

> The first talbukin tended to stay in China for a long time before they came to South Korea, this was because it took a long time to save enough money to leave China. When they got to South Korea they realized how good many things here are and would arrange to have their family members smuggled out of North Korea and China. In the early 2000s it was a lot harder to come to South Korea, it cost more money to pay a broker, and it was more difficult to find a safe path along which to travel. As more and more talbukin have made it to South Korea, the process has become a lot easier and now, if you have enough money, it is possible to come directly from China. Nowadays,

[31] North East China field work. October 2011.

> talbukin in South Korea send money, clothes, music, dramas to their families in the North, as well as calling by mobile phone (Interview with Soo-min Jeong: arrived South Korea 2003).

Despite Soo-min's assertions that the process of defection from the North has become easier, a factor underlined in both the *Citizens' Alliance* report and in Haggard and Noland's 2011 text is the difficulty for talbukin of emigration to, and resettlement in South Korea. A commonly shared feature of North Korean refugees' resettlement in South Korea, according to the report, is that it is affected by, "Psychological baggage and trauma…[And] In addition to their past stressful and often traumatic experiences in the country of origin and countries of transit, the migration in itself produces enormous stress" (*NKHR Briefing Report No.5*.: 11). Haggard and Noland confirm this, stating that, "Controlled clinical studies by doctors working with North Korean refugees in South Korea found few of their patients to be free of psychological disorders" (Haggard and Noland 2011: 36). Joo-shin Jeong's 2009 text, *Understanding the Question of Modern North Korean refugees*[32] explains that, for many talbukin, the journey to South Korea results in the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This kind of psychological trauma, Jeong determines, is experienced less severely, and for shorter periods, in individuals who are with family or who are able to develop strong emotional and instrumental support around them (Jeong 2009: 27).

As a group, there are a number of defining factors which can explain the emerging characteristics of the North Korean migrant community in South Korea. Firstly, according to numerous sources, the majority of recent arrivals to South Korea are female. Secondly, focusing on the last 10 years, the average age of North Korean refugees to South Korea is in the 20-39 age bracket. Thirdly, the majority of refugees come from the northern provinces of North Korea. Fourthly, a majority of North Korean migrants spend time in a third country after leaving North Korea, in most cases this means traveling through China and on to Southeast Asia before contacting South Korean diplomatic persons or local authorities and traveling to South Korea.[33]

Furthermore, according to the *Citizens' Alliance* report, "North Korean re-settlers suffer mostly from lack of friends and separation from family" (*NKHR Briefing Report No.5*: 21). Compounding the difficulties of separation from family members remaining in the North or in China is the well documented family

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[32] *현대 탈북자 문제의 이해*

[33] The Ministry of Unification by 2010.04., *NKHR Briefing Report No.5*., Haggard and Noland 2011., Lee et al. 2007: *The Social and Psychological Acculturation of North Korean refugee Families*.

breakdown affecting many North Korean migrant families once re-settled in South Korea. In their 2007 text, *Family Dissolution and Reorganization of North Korean Refugees*[34] Soon-Hyung Lee et al. highlight the destructive effects of the migration process on North Korean migrant families. Focusing on the family as the organizational unit that was of greatest value during the food crisis in North Korea, Lee et al. investigate the effects of the gendered migration process, cohabitation and marriage as strategies of survival for North Korean women and the effects of long term separation on the relationships between parents and children who have met again in South Korea. The authors emphasize the psychological symptoms of North Koreans who have experienced family dissolution, explaining that a sense of loss, anger, guilt and depression are common after long periods of separation (Lee et al., 2007). A talbukin, Chang-gyu Kim, explains from his own experiences;

> I have some friends who left North Korea alone and then also spent a long time in China and in South Korea on their own before other family joined them. One friend told me that she has had a lot of arguments with her mother since she arrived. She no longer feels any jeong [emotional attachment/intimacy] for her mother and she doesn't want to live together. This is very common among my friends who have met their family after a long time apart (Discussion with Chang-gyu Kim: arrived South Korea 2002).

Arrival in South Korea can mark the beginning of a disorientating and isolating period during which talbukin attempt to adapt to a new political, economic, and cultural environment. For many this process can mean starting from scratch in regards to establishing networks with which to navigate the new socio-political terrain. For those without any family members the task of establishing a new life and forging an identity compatible with the landscape of a society that places such a premium on blood-based kinship and instrumentally-affective social networks can be a mammoth task. Jaeyeol Yee discusses the two main forms of social networks that exist among South Koreans, *yeon-gyeol* and *yeonjul*.[35] According to Yee, "There is a strong tendency [in South Korea] for people to use regional, school and family ties as a means of doing business, getting information and making important decisions" (Yee 2003: 505). Yee underlines the exclusionary characteristics of social networks in South Korea, explaining that while 'yeon-gyul' refers to a more neutral connection between people, 'yeonjul', "built upon close and personal trust relationships…tend to become a barrier to those who do not

[34] *(탈북민의 가족 해체와 재구성)*

[35] 연결과 연줄.

share the link" (Yee 2003: 506).[36] Jaehyuck Lee adds to this understanding of the more nefarious aspects of social networks in South Korean society, pointing out that, "the Korean word *Yeonjul* refers to an exclusive network, with strong connotations of serving its members mainly as an informal (and many times illegal) route of collective rent seeking through network mobilization…backdoor rent seeking" (Lee 2003: 582). It would be unfair to describe Korean society as being hostile to outsiders. However, it is important to keep in mind a social milieu that has a "very homogenous association within the lives of sex, age, and region…that may work against social integration" (Yee 2003: 526). Investigating the network making process demands an eye turned to the quotidian, to aspects of everyday life as experienced by North Korean refugees themselves.

2.2 Non Governmental Organizations

> [This group is] just for people to come and meet other people, to make friends and get to know about South Korean life and North Korean life. We can help each other, many people are alone and this group can help people make friends. We have these kinds of groups in Busan and in Daegu (Interview with Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).

Recent estimates put the number of NGOs in South Korea working with talbukin at over 30,[37] although there are also many unofficial organizations which are not registered. The 'themes' of the NGOs in which I participated during my field work are equally as varied, as are the funding sources of these NGOs, ranging from embassy funding, religious organizational sponsorship and individual contributions. For the purposes of this section I will limit my explanation of NGOs to the two organizations in which I have been most actively involved. I believe that these NGOs offer examples of the work being done with North Korean refugees and demonstrate the kind of environment created to facilitate network building.

Located just outside of central Seoul, *PSCORE*[38] (People for Successful COrean Reunification), describes itself on its website as,

> A non-profit, non-religious, non-partisan NGO based in Seoul & Washington, DC. PSCORE strives for mutual understanding and harmony between the two Koreas and

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[36] Yee (2003) further explains that these types of social ties usually transcend institutionalized rules and formal prescriptions. Some companies even require job applicants to state a list of friends and acquaintances prominent in either politics or government.

[37] 북한이탈주민단체 현황표 as compiled by 북한 전략 센터 (2010).

[38] 성통만사

> aims to provide a platform to discuss topics such as democratization, human rights and social issues. We hope to bridge the gap between South Korea, North Korea and the international community. (http://www.pscore.org/).

PSCORE was established in 2006 by, "Young North Korean refugees, South Korean university students, and foreigners interested in improving human rights in North Korea and reunifying the Korean peninsula" (http://www.pscore.org/). Soo-min Jeong, talbukin and employee of PSCORE, explains,

> The primary focus of PSCORE is offering education opportunities to talbukin. The organization offers opportunities for talbukin to receive tutoring in a variety of subjects with South Korean and foreign teachers working on a voluntary basis. The second goal of the organization is to change the attitude of South Korean people in regards to both the constantly changing political situation with North Korea and the lives of talbukin (Interview with Soo-min Jeong: arrived South Korea 2003).

The organization also offers opportunities for talbukin, South Koreans and people from outside of Korea to come together in 'cultural events', 'camps' and other themed social events. Tutoring takes the form of one-to-one mentoring, bringing together native English speakers to tutor North Korean refugees, many of whom have had little experience with the English language prior to entering South Korea. Both tutors and the talbukin students are interviewed beforehand to assess their sincerity. Volunteer tutoring is an important means by which young North Korean refugees who are accepted into the program can make new friends and receive vitally required extra education.

> Without needing to pay any money, talbukin can receive tutoring, can join us at the movies and can attend our seminars. This is an important way to help talbukin. Each year our organization applies for funding for these activities from the government, because of this support, we can provide mentoring, tutoring and other activities for free (Interview with Soo-min).

Cultural events are varied, taking the form of ice skating, movies, trips to tourist sites in Seoul and group dinners. The purpose of these events is to bring young North Korean refugees together with foreigners and South Koreans in an informal environment in which mutual exchange is possible and the emphasis is on fun, rather than formal learning.

These events proved themselves of great importance for expediting a sense of community between people, a feeling perhaps made more palpable through a discussion of a Young Han Woori group meeting.

> Young Han Woori (YHW) was created two years ago by a group of North Korean and South Korean students. I was one of the founding members and, at first, I have to admit it was really hard [to organize and maintain the group]. There weren't many people from South or North Korea that wanted to join the meetings. As time has gone by, however, the group has grown and we now have over 50 members. I'm really proud of what we have achieved; it was a case of convincing people to come along one at a time (Interview with Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).

Woo-sung, one of the founding members of YHW and himself a talbukin, continued, explaining the purpose of the YHW group:

> A lot of North Korea refugees come out of Hanawon and they don't know how to live in South Korea. In YHW, we try to create a space in which North Korean refugees can come together with South Koreans and the occasional foreigner to socialize, learn and build networks. They can learn the information required to facilitate successful settlement in South Korea, it's also hoped that they can make some friends through the group (Interview with Woo-sung).

This organization is, for the most part, organized by young North Korean refugees and South Koreans who attend the Franciscan Catholic Church. Although funding is received from the Catholic Church, itself acting as a conduit for donations from the congregation, Seo-jin Ahn, a South Korean member of the group and the president throughout 2011 explains, "YHW is not a religious group, our focus is on inclusion of all different types of people. It doesn't matter where you are from or what your background is, everyone is welcome to come along and exchange their ideas and culture" (Interview with Seo-jin Ahn. January 29th 2012). Aside from the monthly meetings, the contents of which will be explicated below, YHW organizes regular events including, but not limited to, North Korean food events, hiking trips, ongoing volunteering at a children's home,[39] group meals and English tutoring. "It's important to get people together, to give people from North Korea a chance to make some South Korean friends, talk with each other, play some games and bridge the gap that exists between South and North Koreans", Woo-sung reflects (Interview with Woo-sung).

YHW meetings are held one Saturday each month at a location not far from the Franciscan Catholic Church. Group organizers arrive early, preparing food and going over the plans for the meeting. Members arrive in dribs and drabs, lateness

[39] This is a home sponsored and operated by the Catholic Church for the children of young North Korean mothers who have come to South Korea without the Chinese fathers and for whom taking care of their children is not yet possible with the effort required to settle into South Korean society. I volunteered at this home for the period of 2011 and early 2012.

being an on-going issue.[40] Shortly after 2pm, the meeting is convened in the living room of the house, although as membership numbers have grown, meetings have started to be held in the large dining room that branches off into the kitchen.

Members sit cross legged on the floor of the room, backs pushed flat against the walls, some are obviously close friends and sit arm-in-arm or with their head propped up on the shoulders of their neighbour, while newer members tend to find a space closer to the back of the room. As the late arrivals shuffle in, complete strangers gradually find themselves cheek by jowl. The leader of the group passes out the meeting schedule and opens proceedings, "Good afternoon everyone, it's a rainy day today so I'd like to thank everyone for coming out for our meeting. I see a lot of new faces today so why don't we begin with some introductions?" The new faces reticently announce themselves to the group, shuffling nervously in their cramped spaces as they explain what they do and where they are from. Discoveries of shared origins are met by smiles and excited cries of, "That's where I'm from too!" Once the new comers have introduced themselves, a seminarian from the nearby church leads everyone in a song exhorting the greatness of Baek-du Mountain. The clapping dies down following the singing and another organizer of the group, meeting schedule clutched in hand, reads out the expenditures for the previous month, "Last month we spent fifty thousand won on food for birthdays and twenty thousand for snacks. We used twenty thousand won for gift vouchers and thirty to pay for lunches for people who volunteered at the children's home".

Just as the attention of those present begins to wander and the room begins to resemble more of a Korean public sauna[41] than a meeting of a serious organization, the leader of the group announces the selection of this month's 'Manitto SuHaeng'[42] and things perk up again. Seo-jin, leader of the group for 2011, explains, "Because our group only meets once a month it can occasionally be a little uncomfortable for people when they get together. No one meets each other enough; the Manitto Su-haeng is meant to makes things a little more comfortable between people" (Interview Seo-jin). The 'Manitto Su-haeng' is a very important concept in considering how North Korean refugees create and

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[40] In most of the groups in which I have participated, combating tardiness among talbukin has been an ongoing struggle. Soo-min explains, "For South Koreans, keeping promises is a kind of credit- trust is money. But North Korean society is a society without concepts of trust and money. Therefore, if I am late there are no consequences; neither trust nor money will be lost" (Interview with Soo-min: arrived South Korea 2003).

[41] 찜질방

[42] 마니또 수행

maintain networks. A handful of soft, red and yellow pieces of felt cloth are passed out, each person taking one. On each piece of cloth is printed a word. Everyone takes a turn to announce their word; "Chicken" is swiftly answered with "Beer", "Romeo" with "Juliet" and "Soju" with "Snails".[43]

> Once each person has matched their word with its partner, it is their duty for that month to carry out the 'missions' together, with their opposite number. It is expected that you message your partner at least ten times during the month and meet up to do such things as watching a movie together, eating a meal or having a coffee (Interview with Seo-jin).

The random pairings decide the couples for the month's Manitto Suheang, an activity which, as described by Seo-jin, encourages members of the group to get to know each other on a more personal level. It is recommended that participants meet their partner at least once and learn something about them which can then be reported back to the group. This is, in the words of one participant, "Just for people to make friends, they can do what they want to do, it's good to get some South Korean and North Korean friends together" (Field notes April 30th 2011). Each pair briefly introduces themselves and the group moves onto the next stage of the meeting, ushered along by the group leaders who, as seems to be the case each month, are finding themselves further and further behind schedule.

Returning to their positions propped up against the wall of the room, each person is organized into one of four smaller groups for an activity appropriately named, *Young Han Woori Sharing*.[44] Once the noise of people moving this way and that begins to die down, the group leaders shepherd their newly formed discussion groups into separate areas of the house, hands full of snacks and drinks, and, sitting propped up against one another, begin dissecting the month's topics.

[43] 치킨과 맥주, 로미오와 줄리엣, 소주와 골뱅이.
[44] 영한우리 나눔.

Smaller groups allow for discussion on more personal topics:

"Topics are decided upon by the organization leaders in their monthly meeting" Seo-jin explains (Interview with Seo-jin). This month's questions are, firstly: In North Korea what kind of recreational activities did you do? Compare this with the kind of activities that people do in South Korea. Secondly: What kind of food do young people in North Korea enjoy, particularly on special occasions and when you are invited to places? And: In North Korea, have you had experiences doing part time work? This should not mean your own business, rather something that people do to make some cash. The smaller groups allow for a more informal environment, which in turn encourages people to talk about what could be considered more personal issues: One participant explained, "When I lived in Pyongyang, I used to go to the fun park whenever I could, we'd eat good food and stay there until the evening". "We used to go to the cinema a lot, but the movies weren't very interesting", another confessed. "I used to do work fixing machines, but I never made much money doing it", a recently arrived young man tells the group. Participants are offered the chance to talk about events in their lives which would not normally be considered as open for discussion. Everyone's stories are different and, as is made explicit through the following examples, the contrast between the experiences of South and North Koreans is particularly stark;

> I remember my grandfather told me that when the American bombers came, the sun was blacked out and everything became dark. His brother lost his arm in the war; he has very bad memories of that time (Field notes: Discussion by North Korean participant on the Korean War. May 28th 2011).

> I don't really know much about the Korean War, just what I've read in text books at school. But I think it was a really hard time (Field notes: Discussion by South Korean participant on the Korean War. May 28th 2011).

Thirty minutes passes quickly and each group returns to the central room, one member of each group carrying the recorded discussion. A summary of each group's discussion is read aloud to the larger gathering, prizes are given for the most interesting group discussion and the best presenter. As people continue to finish off the snacks and drinks, a priest[45] from the Franciscan Catholic Church moves to the front of the room and begins a discussion. As in keeping with the 'Everyone and all ideas are accepted' policy of the group, the discussion is not so much spiritual in nature as it approaches existential questions. "If you have something delicious in front of you and something which you dislike the taste of in front of you, which would you eat first?", asks the priest. A few hands are raised, but each person is the room is given a chance to voice their opinion. After collating and considering the answers, group members, who by now are getting hot and bothered in the small room, are told the point of the question. The priest explains that in life there are often times of difficulty during which a person has to endure hardship in order to gain reward. Members of the group take a moment to consider what this means in the context of their own lives, before the group leader announces the end of the meeting with a reminder that for those who are interested, Mass will begin at 6pm, in the nearby Cathedral.

For YHW members, as with those who take part in PSCORE events, there is no pressure to come to the meetings, although for those who attend regularly, they become eligible for a stipend to aid with study costs. These organizations are run by talbukin and South Koreans with the aim of bringing people together in a comfortable environment conducive to speaking openly and building relationships.

2.3 Churches

> We walk a block and a half and get to what looks like the entrance to an underground parking facility. I don't know if it showed on my face, but I had expected a more European style Church-like building, instead, as I descended the stairs I felt like I was heading into a bomb shelter. We entered inside the sparsely decorated outer-hall where I could already hear the sounds of Christian rock. The main room was no larger than most pool halls I had seen in Korea. A large pillar divided a congregation of about 100 people into two sides of the room. The walls were bare with the exception of a banner on the wall near the front wishing congratulations to members of the congregation who had recently graduated from the Church school. At the front of the room was a stage on which as we entered, the band was playing a song of worship and encouraging the congregation to get involved. We shuffled through the swaying people and found two seats near the back (Field notes February 2011).

[45] 신부님

When considering these organizations it is important that focus is not limited to the church environment itself, but that scope should be extended to activities both organized and sponsored by these religious organizations. Among the many groups and organizations working with North Korean refugees, there are several well known religious groups also involved in creating community for talbukin. These vary in denomination and I will limit my description to two such places I attended.

The above vignette illustrates the surprise I felt during my first encounter with a Korean Reformed Protestant church. This church, located in central Seoul, is well known among the North Korean refugee community as an organization with a large talbukin congregation. It was no surprise then, when I was invited to attend the church by several talbukin friends. My first experience came in early 2011. As people joined in singing with the band, chanting and waving their hands in the air, the environment resembled less of a church, as I knew it, and more of a rock concert. However, the group singing, bible study groups, shared meals after the service and outside-of-church activities had two overarching functions– to encourage socialization and solidarity. Expediting the creation of a sense of belonging is at the heart of the church services. Community is not found in the building itself, but in the people met during and after the weekly services, in the church sponsored study groups and in the invitations to group members homes for meals and discussion. During my first time at the previous church I was invited to introduce myself to the congregation, an experience that brought several comments from around the room as I used Korean to do so. I was put into the same bible study group as the friend who had invited me, and was given the chance to partake in the lunchtime meal after the study session. People were interested in me; elderly and young alike asked what I was doing, where I was from and if I would be coming again. I immediately experienced what could only be described as the beginnings of a sense of belonging.

My time attending X Church brought me into contact with individuals who had arrived in South Korea alone, met others in similar situations through the church, and married shortly thereafter, with successful business people and students, with new arrivals from North Korea and with talbukin who had been in South Korea for years. What was shared by these individuals was the sense of group identity, an environment that encouraged transcendence of the individual to the group and identification of the group as a kind of family. This will be discussed further in the next chapter. These environments are indispensible for people who come to

South Korea without blood based relationships; they are a key element of the settlement process for talbukin. This was also evident in my time spent attending Heaven church on the north side of Seoul.

On Seoul's north side, Heaven church was smaller in size than many other churches I had attended. Amongst the talbukin I had spoken with, few knew of its existence. Woo-sung, a regular attendee at the services, explained:

> At Heaven church there are about 8 talbukin and perhaps around 10 South Koreans. They are all relatively young. When we get together it's very much like a family. We don't think of each other like, "He is from North Korea, she is from South Korea", everyone is the same. We all look after each other like family. We celebrate each other's birthdays and help each other out when we have problems. If someone has a particularly difficult time, they can always speak to the pastor. As opposed to the financial benefits that some of the larger churches offer talbukin, our church focuses on mutual caring, in the same sense as a family cares for its members. I think this is far more important. Also, the pastor runs a café nearby the church. In this café, young talbukin are offered free barista training. They are also welcome to use the space to study in whenever they want (Interview with Woo-sung).

Heaven church, with its smaller congregation, had a more intimate feel to it. The service was not usually particularly remarkable, with the pastor reading the primary passages from the bible and selected members of the congregation also contributing. Bible readings were interwoven with singing, the pastor playing the guitar and a congregation member playing the electric piano. In a small room at the back, parents with children too young to participate in the proceedings would watch the service through a glass window, entertaining their tots when required. As Woo-sung explained, "When we get together it's very much like a family." In explaining that it felt "Like family", Woo-sung was emphasizing a deeply felt connectivity that had been built up between him and other church members over a period of five years since he had started attending. For Woo-sung, the pastor and other members of Heaven church were people who had played an important role during his settlement in South Korea and with whom he had developed a strong sense of mutual trust. Woo-sung had arrived alone in South Korea and the congregation of Heaven church had come to hold a more profound meaning to him than simply a place to pray or a place to meet friends– it was a place of comfort and a place in which invested feelings had come to take on a heavier meaning. Woo-sung did not invoke the familial idiom lightly when expressing his thoughts on Heaven church; rather he was referring to a kind of intimacy that went beyond friendship, approaching feelings of kinship.

Heaven church also provided an environment conducive to meeting new people

and becoming closer to others. On occasion the chairs in the room would be placed facing each other, conversation moving from subjects in the bible to discussions on more personal challenges. Services took place in a room in which the walls were covered with posters drawn by younger congregation members exclaiming, “We are one family”, “Love each other” and other expressions of unity and intimacy. Services were followed by group meals together, at which time conversation moved to more personal matters, outside the realms of faith and God. Activities outside of Church were also frequent occurrences and included hikes up the nearby mountains and group trips to see plays or movies. Heaven church, as with X Church, was imbued with an environment that exuded an almost palpable sense of solidarity, with a focus on emotional support, communication and mutual understanding.

In addition to the institutionalized environments in which talbukin come together to meet people and socialize, it is also useful to offer a more personal example of how a person from North Korea conducts themselves in the area where they reside and with the people they meet in the above mentioned sites.

2.4 The area of residence.

While volunteering for PSCORE organization in 2010, I met a young man who was taking part in the organization’s English tutoring program. Woo-sung Lee explained to me that since he had been living in South Korea one of the biggest challenges was learning English. As he was a university student at the time it was expected that he pass the required language component in order to graduate. I in turn explained the details of my own study. Woo-sung proposed that I move into his apartment, “If you can speak English in the apartment, I will help you meet people”, he told me. We both agreed this was a mutually beneficial idea and in January 2011 I moved in with Woo-sung in his apartment on the outskirts of Seoul. My time living with Woo-sung would offer me great insight into the day-to-day living and the ‘area of residence’ of a talbukin.

Woo-sung arrived in South Korea in 2004. Prior to leaving North Korea, he was studying to become a doctor, achieving high social status and hoping for a bright future in his home town, near the border with China. This changed, however, when conditions in the country continued to worsen, eventually forcing Woo-sung into leaving North Korea, “The food shortage in North Korea got more serious. People starved to death. The number of orphans and beggars rose. Patients died

due to lack of medicine… my family could not take this situation. So I quit university in 2004, escaped North Korea and arrived in China to ask relatives there for help. When I arrived in China, I became aware of a different life" (Woo-sung. British embassy blog). Before Woo-sung was permitted to enter South Korean society, he was required to spend time in Hanawon, the government operated resettlement centre for arriving North Koreans,[46] and during this period Woo-sung learnt about South Korean society and met others who had come from North Korea, some of whom he would remain in contact with long after graduating the institute.

After two months Woo-sung was permitted to leave Hanawon, equipped with his newly gained knowledge of South Korean society. Initially he lived in a city in central South Korea, however, in 2006 he moved to Seoul, taking up a study position in a prestigious university. Woo-sung has lived in the same apartment complex since that time. Located on the outskirts of Seoul, near the end of the subway line, Woo-sung's apartment complex is home to a number of North Korean refugees.[47] Paying a subsidized rent, the apartment is effectively gifted to them by the South Korean government. For Woo-sung, living alone and dividing his time between university and his job, the apartment is a perfect size. Getting to and from school and work could sometimes be a trial, but otherwise, the area is peaceful and the air is clean.

> From the outside, there was little to distinguish apartment 202 from any other of the apartments in that block. The tall, uniform buildings that are such a trademark of suburban South Korea negated any sense of individuality and yet, brought a sense of comfort to me each time I arrived back in Seoul. Inside the apartment, sunlight was not of a premium and it was required that I use the light whenever I entered the room. I slept in the small room which had previously been used for storage space, while Woo-sung occupied the larger, communal room. The kitchen was small, with just enough room for one or, if stretched, two people to prepare food on the glass covered table that was home to both the rice cooker and the microwave. The balcony hid behind the beige curtain and sliding doors that separated it from the communal room, although intended as a space for more domestic callings, it had become home to a dozen plants of various sizes and looked more like a greenhouse than an area for drying clothes (Field notes March 19th 2011).

For seven months I lived together with Woo-sung in the apartment described above, during which time he invited me to join him as he attended weddings, clubs,

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[46] 하나원 Hanawon was opened on July 8th, 1999. (*NKHR Briefing Report No.5: 11).*

[47] Roy Grinker (1998) explains that "Because the government officials in charge of defectors want to centralize them, they ordinarily live in the same apartment complexes" (Grinker 1998:238). This heightens the sense of community between refugees, promoting a sense of solidarity between people from North Korea.

church meetings, NGO meetings and visited nearby friends. Daily life for Woo-sung would consist of going to classes, either at university, or once he graduated, going to English and computer academy so as to brush up on skills required to gain employment. Mondays to Thursdays would be largely uneventful, with one exception, on an almost nightly basis, Woo-sung and I would go to a neighbour's home for dinner. It was a standing invite of sorts, both Woo-sung and I were young, busy bachelor types and, although I would later discover Woo-sung possessed extraordinary culinary skills, neither of us had an inclination for regular cooking. Our meals were shared with the mother and younger sister of a woman with whom Woo-sung had graduated Hanawon. They had arrived in South Korea less than three months prior to my moving in with Woo-sung and were in the beginning of a long process of adapting to their new environment. The oldest daughter had come to South Korea some six years earlier with the oldest brother of the family, who had then moved to Canada. She lived separately from her mother and younger sister. I saw our shared dinners as an important example of how talbukin maintain contacts with one another and develop ties of instrumental and emotional significance. Woo-sung and I often helped the youngest daughter, newly enrolled in the local middle school, with her studies and would also proffer advice to both her and her mother on various issues that would arise. Therefore, if the weekdays were spent in such a manner, with visiting and sharing meals being among the defining features, how was the period from Friday to Sunday usually passed?

Weddings, volunteer work, church groups, meetings with members of North Korean related activists groups and informal, social occasions shared one underlying feature when Friday rolled around each week; a great deal of energy and money would be required to make it to the following Monday. Friday evenings, after a day of study and/or work were usually spent relaxing at the neighbour's home, eating a meal prepared by the mother of the house, or perhaps takeaway chicken from the local fried chicken restaurant. This provided the setting for shared discussion on the events of the week and watching television. The evening would often end with Woo-sung stretched out on the floor, making the most of the under-floor heating, while I would discuss topics with the mother of the house related to whatever was showing on television at the time. "Is this really how Americans are, do they really act like this?" Mrs. Lee[48] would quiz me, intrigued by the flagrant displays of sexuality she would witness in whatever movie was playing at that time. "You know, this isn't real", she would insist,

[48] No blood relationship to Woo-sung Lee.

while gesturing to the large, flatscreen television showing the latest blockbuster. Mrs. Lee, as with many other talbukin new to South Korea and experiencing Western-style entertainment for the first time, Woo-sung explained, considered many of the things she saw on television as a kind of propaganda rather than entertainment. "It's all fake! It's a lie!" She would exclaim, apparently expecting I would agree with her. Unsure if Mrs. Lee was perhaps approaching the truth, I would simply nod in agreement. Woo-sung and I would usually make it home by 1:00 am, leaving enough time to prepare for the next day.

Most often, Saturday was 'Wedding Day'. Inevitably, as the area in which Woo-sung lived was on the outskirts of Seoul, we would rise before 8:00am so as to arrive at the wedding venue before midday. During spring in particular, frequent weddings meant a lot of hard work and a lot of money. Woo-sung would often be attending two weddings in a weekend, sometimes of talbukin friends and sometimes of South Korean friends. Weddings were an important time both to renew contact with people and to ensure a kind of investment was made into one's own future wedding plans. Common to Korean wedding culture is the concept of giving gifts of money[49] and this is no different among North Koreans living in South Korea, Jin-hee Park, recent arrival to South Korea explained, "In North Korea people also give money at weddings. Since the revaluation of the North Korean currency in 2008, however, and the subsequent collapse in value of the North Korean won, Chinese Yuan is used for everyday transactions, while North Korean Won is still given at weddings"[50] (Discussion with Jin-hee: arrived 2009). Depending on how close one felt one's self to be to the bride, groom, or both celebrants, two weddings a weekend could cost up to two hundred thousand Korean won. This is not 'lost' money however, as the expectation is, in the words of Woo-sung, "When I get married, these people will also come to my wedding and they will also bring money for me." The wedding would usually take place in a wedding hall, meaning that time was restricted to allow for the smooth movement of the conveyor belt of couples getting married. Following the ceremony, photographs were taken and guests moved to the buffet where they exchanged meal coupons for as much food as they could consume in the time it took for guests from the wedding that followed to arrive. What is important to consider here is that a large amount of the day was already gone, having been whittled away in preparation for and in attendance of an event, the organizers of which could be of varying degrees of closeness. Furthermore to participation in

[49] 부조. The amount varies according to the perceived closeness to the celebrants. A common figure given seems to be between 30,000-100,000 Korean won.

[50] In public, under the watchful eye of the state, North Korean money is tendered, but in private, foreign currency holds far greater 'buying power'.

weddings and other social events, Woo-sung was also regularly on the move participating in meetings coordinated by organizations.

> Woo-sung and I arrived about an hour late due to having to travel across the city from a wedding. We attempted to enter the meeting without alerting others to our tardiness; this proved a difficult task due to the slide show and podium placed directly beside the entrance. We found two seats at the front and sat low in our chairs, realizing this was the final presentation of the day (Field notes 23rd April 2011).

If there were no other weddings on the schedule that day, Woo-sung would usually have something planned with an organization. Scrambling from subway to bus, depending on the distance and direction of the next appointment, lateness was unavoidable as the above extract demonstrates. Meetings with organizations usually took the form of cultural events organized by NGOs or gatherings held by groups working for causes such as North Korean human rights and/or groups dedicated to facilitating settlement of talbukin in South Korea. Meetings would usually run until the early evening, concluding with a meal during which participants would have the opportunity to discuss subjects outside of the scope of the group's agenda. Following the meeting, Woo-sung would head home, arriving late in the evening. If there was time, he would meet with the neighbours, otherwise he would relax in his own home.

Sunday was another busy day. The first order of the day would be either a meeting with an organization or church. Once a month Woo-sung would volunteer at a children's home; rising at 7am, he would travel to the other side of Seoul, spending the morning with children in a home run by the Catholic Church. After sharing lunch with other members of the volunteer group, some North Korean refugees and some South Koreans, he would once again walk to the subway, this time taking it to central Seoul where one of the churches he attended was located. Church would begin in the late afternoon. If possible, Woo-sung would take the chance to rest in a coffee shop beforehand. The service would last until after six in the evening and would be followed by a meal with other members. If there were no other appointments, Woo-sung would get home in the late evening, leaving enough time to prepare for the coming week.

Far from being a time to rest, the weekend was a period when time, effort and money were exerted in network building and maintenance. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this was not a 'dead investment', as outgoing money was usually returned, in various forms, as debts were repaid and recreated. Time spent in organizations or churches was time spent building relationships with people who shared common goals. Unfortunately, for many talbukin without

family in South Korea, the significance of these relationships can often be underestimated;

> It doesn't really matter what a person learnt in North Korea because when they come to South Korea, it won't be of value. It is necessary to change your way of thinking in regards to many things in South Korea, building networks for example. In North Korea social networks are not at the centre of things, first and foremost is the nation, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. There are so many talbukin that fail to recognize this difference and are unable to create human relationships that are so important for living here [in South Korea] (Interview with Soo-min: arrived South Korea 2002).

Time invested from Friday to Sunday evening was necessary to keep 'alive' human connections that had been long in the making. In spite of coming to South Korea alone and living without family for a period of seven years, Woo-sung had managed to establish diffuse, instrumental and deeply entrenched networks that transcended the North Korean refugee community. It is important to consider what these networks represented to Woo-sung and others like him. What does it mean to be part of South Korean society for talbukin, many of whom arrive in South Korea with high expectations, such as Jin-hee (chapter one), of enjoying a new life in a country where they are 'just like everybody else'?

2.5 Reading the talbukin community.

> "One hundred percent of the time, when you throw a birthday party for these young people, they cry for the family they left behind"[51] (*Chosun Ilbo* April 2009).

> North Korean refugees here say they suffer emotionally whenever tension arises between the two Koreas. "We're dispirited whenever incidents like the sinking of the Navy corvette Cheonan and the shelling of Yeongpyeong Island take place, wondering what South Koreans must think about us. We feel as if we'd committed a crime," said one[52] (ibid May 2011).

> Though defectors want to live in the South, they have difficulty living there [in South Korea] due to a lack of expertise and skills. The situation is much worse for those who cannot land jobs and are physically weak. Indifference and cold-heartedness of South Koreans make the lives of defectors more unbearable (*Dong Ah Ilbo* June 2011).[53]

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[51] Gwak Jong-moon, principal of Hangyoreh Middle-High School, an educational institution in South Korea for teenage North Korean refugees. Quoted in *Chosun Ilbo* (http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2009/04/15/2009041561003.html)

[52] *N.Korean Defectors Suffer for the Regime They Fled* (http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/05/21/2011052100329.html)

[53] *New reunification centre director* (http://english.donga.com/srv/service.php3?biid=2011060910838)

Often the possibility for material gain was the initial pull factor bringing talbukin to a church or an NGO group and it was not uncommon for talbukin to 'shop around' the groups for the best remuneration package. This kind of instrumental benefit is part and parcel of the experience of talbukin settling into South Korean life. Those who continued to attend meetings, however, would often discover emotional benefits as well as the regular stipends. This section considers how talbukin themselves consider their relationship to South Korean society, and what it means to be an outsider on the inside.

The articles above represent a small sample of the numerous reports regularly published on the difficulties experienced by North Koreans in settling into South Korean society. These articles highlight several factors. Firstly, family and the hometown left behind are never forgotten. As one young man acknowledged during an interview, "These feelings stay in your heart, you never forget your hometown." Secondly, talbukin are especially sensitive to their surroundings. As the phrase that is recycled in so many news articles goes, "North and South Korea remain technically at war since the signing of the armistice in 1953." Indeed, this continued state of war is often played on for political advantage in both the North and South and, as the second article above illustrates, it seems it is often talbukin who feel the weight of responsibility for what transpires in the geo-political arena. Thirdly, many talbukin continue to harbour feelings of displacement and alienation. Many feel they have no place in the fast-paced, capitalist South Korea. The gap between talbukin, individuals brought up in a socialist, highly group-oriented system, and South Koreans, raised in a highly competitive, democratic society, can often feel like a whole world of difference. As Ji-young Seo, who arrived in 2005 explained, "There seems to be a wall between us [and South Koreans], we are the same ethnicity but there is a prejudice against people from the North and communication is really difficult. This has got worse in the last four years as more and more North Koreans have come to South Korea" (Field notes June 25th 2011). Kyung Eun Ha, employee at NKHR NGO[54], explained her thoughts on the growing talbukin community;

> In the meantime North Korean refugees also become more passive in engaging with South Koreans in cities. Sometimes, they themselves feel inferior, so refuse to integrate with South Koreans. For instance, our organization runs a North and South Korean student exchange program. On one occasion, a student said some North Korean students refused to play with the South Koreans kids, believing that one of the South Korean

[54] *Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights* Non-Governmental Organization.

> students made condescending remarks towards her (Correspondence with Kyung Eun Ha. March 8th 2012).

Adding to this sensation is the realisation that many, if not most South Koreans, are deeply ambivalent about reunification and view the presence of talbukin in South Korea as a drain on their taxes. "Not long after I arrived here [in South Korea]," explained Seung-soo Kim, "I was giving a presentation to an audience of South Koreans. Expecting a room full of raised hands, I asked, "Who wants reunification with the North?" I was shocked when less than thirty percent of the room put their hands up" (Interview with Seung-soo Kim: arrived South Korea 2010). Concern with rising taxes and a weakened economy– should reunification occur– means most South Koreans are willing to pay no more than lip-service to the idea of a united Korea. For many talbukin, the realisation that reunification does not hold the same importance to many South Koreans is the hardest part. This is coupled with the fact that, despite an official rhetoric expounding the significance of North and South Koreans being, "One ethnic group, one culture and one language", the actions of the wider society are often lukewarm at best to the growing numbers of North Korean refugees entering South Korea.[55]

> The past always follows me, I will always be talbukin, I will always be on the outside, and this is how I feel, like I am able to do things like interviews and documentaries, but I feel that it is hard to be on the inside, I feel that people and companies worry about hiring me because I am from North Korea. (Field notes. Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).[56]

Woo-sung's realization that he will, "Always be on the outside" has come with experience, and an acceptance that to be successful as a North Korean in South Korea it is necessary at times to perform the role of grateful refugee, giving interviews and accepting roles in documentaries, telling and retelling stories of hardship. The past, however, will always follow him. Yet this is a past that, for the most part, is not to be spoken of unless it is framed in a language of suffering and hardship, of starvation and tyranny. Praising North Korea continues to invite jail time and/or fines in South Korea, whereas to offer further condemnation of the North in whatever form that fits into the rhetoric of the mainstream is always welcomed.

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[55] During another interview, Jin-hee explained a similar experience of being shocked by the lack of response she received when she asked an audience of South Koreans how many of them wanted reunification; "Out of an audience of hundreds, only two raised their hands to say they wanted reunification…I was so sad" ("그랬더니 딱 2 명만 손을 들었어요. 수백명이 모여 있었는데…그게 너무 슬펐어요.")

[56] 제일 편한 친구는 아무래도 탈북자 친구예요. 나의 세계를 아는 사람은 나와 같은 세계에 살았던 사람이 가장 잘 알아준잖아요. 내가 무슨 말은 하더라도 나와 비슷한 감정을 느낄 수 있어요.

Jeong (2009) argues that many talbukin develop a split personality of sorts, dividing their identity, psychology and emotions between their new homes in South Korea and their hometowns where their families and friends remain. Jeong postulates that "There is a possibility that the continued growth of a group of people who experience this emotional conflict could be sowing the seeds for future social problems in South Korea" (Jeong 2009: 57). Soo-min, an employee of PSCORE and a talbukin herself explains,

> I don't believe in the [South Korean government's] policies of assimilation. It means I would have to completely change myself, this means that I would be disrespecting myself. I am not ashamed about coming from North Korea…if I was made to throw away who I am, I would lose myself, am I not a person? Am I stupid? I want to protect the North Korean Soo-min, she is important as well (Interview with Soo-min: arrived 2002).

Many of the talbukin I spoke with confessed they feel like outsiders in South Korea. Hye-jin Lee, relatively new to South Korea, explained that,

> Sometimes I speak using a North Korean accent, and sometimes I speak with a South Korea one. When I am at home, I use North Korean, and when I am with North Korean people I use North Korean. When I am at school or talking to people outside I use a South Korean accent.
>
> A couple of times I have used a North Korean accent without thinking in front of South Korean people or with our school teacher. They asked where I was from and I had to tell them I am from Changwon in Gangwondo. I don't actually know where that is! Only three people are aware that I came from North Korea. The others don't. But sometimes my teacher says things in front of other classmates which let other people know that I am not from here. For example, she once asked me in front of everyone if I know how to use the subway. I was really embarrassed. I never tell people where I am from. I don't want people to know because I think they will think badly about me. I try and keep it secret. But it feels bad, uncomfortable, lying to people about where I am from (Discussion with Hye-jin Lee: arrived South Korea 2010).

For talbukin who arrive in South Korea, adaptation can be a long and difficult process, hindered by feelings of guilt, regret and an underlying sense that they will never fit into their new environment. Individuals such as Hye-jin find it necessary to undergo a division of the self. For South Koreans, she uses a South Korean accent, and on the occasion that she makes a mistake with her diction she claims to be from a small town in the North East of South Korea. In front of her North Korean friends and with people she trusts, she relaxes and uses her natural, North Korean accent. Hye-jin confesses that this can be both tiring and uncomfortable for her, as she continuously has to change roles according to her audience.

According to Soo-min, "It takes about five years for a North Korean refugee to stop looking back with regret and instead begin to learn from their mistakes. This is when they begin to look forward and become more settled in South Korean society" (Interview with Soo-min). This is not to say that there are not cases of people from North Korea having made a successful move into the South Korean social milieu; signs seem to indicate that the younger a person and the more family members that accompany them, the quicker they will assimilate into South Korean society. Soo-min adds to this understanding of effective adaptation in South Korea, explaining that,

> The most important thing for North Korean refugees is social education, a practical knowledge of how to live in South Korean society and formal education; teaching them how to study and giving them qualifications and skills that will be recognized in South Korea. This will also provide them with practical abilities that they can use to make money. South Korean society recognizes skill and hard work, it is important to teach North Koreans how to attract the attention of employers while providing them with a sense of self worth (Interview with Soo-min).

It is while in communion with other people from North Korea that many talbukin feel comfortable to speak of times in the North. Conversation in groups like YHW and in religious spaces such as in Heaven church is, for the most part, free from the bombastic condemnation of the North Korean state. These groups are essential for providing a space outside of the politics. Recalling the work of Kim (1992) we can see how, over time, relationships are built up between talbukin who meet regularly. These relationships are created through a kind of *pumasi*– an ongoing exchange of food, alcohol, money and labour– and have both material and emotional benefits for participants. The creation of jeong between those who build social ties with each other ensures that relationships are developed that function more as pseudo kinship relationships, remade with each meeting. It seems apparent that while the relationships being created amongst talbukin and between talbukin and South Koreans are beneficial for those involved, there continues to be a gap between talbukin and the wider society. Although beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to ask, what kind of community is being formed? If talbukin feel most comfortable spending time with others from North Korea, is there a danger of an enclave community being created?

In each of the sites discussed above it is possible to see how a space is created for talbukin to create meaningful social relationships. Over a long period of time, these relationships come to represent something more significant than simply a social network or community as we know it, instead representing a closely related

group of people bound to each other by jeong. To further understand how these ties were created using the idiom of family, it is necessary to take a closer look at the sites in question and the moments of significance contributing towards the creation of pseudo kinship networks.

Chapter Three: Manufacturing kinship

> "I see myself as a mother to them [the members of the group who are from North Korea]. And I want them to think of me in the same way, I hope they see me that way" (Field notes. Discussion with South Korean member of YHW: November 26th 2011).

The previous chapter gave examples of the sites in which talbukin are able to participate in formal and informal activities with other people from North Korea, South Korea and overseas. This thesis argues that, particularly among talbukin who are alone in South Korea, regular attendance at these sites and participation in activities over time opens the possibility for the development of relationships that are neither friend nor family. These relationships embody a different kind of intimacy, imbued with long lasting, emotional significance which represents a kind of processual kinship in a similar vein as that discussed by Janet Carsten (1995, 1997, 2000, 2004) and Ladislav Holy et al. (1996). The above quote, taken from a member of an organization working with talbukin, illustrates how activities observed in each of these sites were framed using the idiom of kinship. Rapport developed at these sites often took the form of pseudo familial relationships, offering deep and diffuse emotionally and instrumentally significant lifelines for talbukin. In a country where family and kin ties are deemed of greatest importance for the giving and receiving of advice and financial assistance (Yee 2003: 514), these manufactured ties provide sources of support for people without 'natural' bonds of kin. This chapter will explain why the activities of talbukin in South Korea can be framed as the manufacturing of kinship. It will then examine the sites in which these pseudo kinship networks are made and significant moments which highlight how social networks are created using the idiom of kinship.

3.1 Sites of manufacturing kinship

> We can no longer take it for granted that our most fundamental social relationships are grounded in 'biology' or 'nature' (Carsten 2000: 1).

As explained in chapter one, this thesis uses the term 'manufacturing kinship' in the sense that here, 'manufacturing' represents the intense time, energy and pecuniary investment that is required for talbukin to create and maintain social networks. 'Kinship' is here used to refer to a process, creating ties of relatedness; as opposed to kinship ties anchored by bonds of substance. Taking the work of Carsten as the starting point, this section looks at the actions of people from North Korea in spiritual and non spiritual, formal and informal sites, as the construction of relationships that approach a form of kinship creation.

Churches, NGOs, language study groups, bible study groups, volunteer groups, weddings, cultural events, group homes and smaller meetings all constitute spaces in which networks are created and maintained and community built. Each of these sites of community building, however, is not to be understood as existing in isolation from one other. It became apparent during my fieldwork that, to borrow Maria Cattell's description of the social ties existing amongst elderly residents of Olney, Philadelphia, "Many of these groups had overlapping memberships and thus helped create dense social networks…" (Cattell 2002: 81). The idiom of family is common to the community building that occurs in each of the sites and invoked in various contexts, but mostly to emphasize solidarity between participants.

3.1. (1) In secular spaces

In her work in Langkawi, Malaysia, Carsten (1995) focused on the *process* of kinship which is tied to the actions of sharing food, living together and developing bonds over a period of time. Here, identity is suggested to be mutable and fluid, through incorporation and equality a person not born to the group as kin may become so. The concepts of incorporation and equality are important for understanding how perceived natural divisions between individuals may be overcome; age difference; gender difference; class difference and ethnic differences to name a few. In a similar vein, this section will highlight how everyday behaviour, "whether it occurs in 'domestic' or 'public' contexts, carries meanings which have political implications" (Carsten 1997: 55). The actions of people from North Korea go beyond mere networking to the creation of relationships that are able to provide deeply entrenched, sustainable, instrumental and emotional ties.

> People who have come from North Korea are very lonely here. They don't have any family; often they don't have many friends. What these people need the most is someone by their side, someone to talk with, and someone to listen to their worries. They need someone to ask about the many things they don't know about, someone who can be as family to them when they need it[57] (Interview with Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).

Attendance of NGO meetings and events offers a variety of benefits to talbukin who are willing and able to invest the time and effort in creating and maintaining

[57] 북한에서 온 탈북자들은 많이 외롭습니다. 그 사람들이 가족도 없고 친구들도 많이 없는데 이제 그 사람들 제일 필요한 게, 이제 그렇게 옆에서 누가 이렇게 친구도 해주고 말도 해주고 이게 고민도 들어주고,, 또 그리고 그 사람들이 모르는 거 물어보게 되면 뭐 아무 때나 가족처럼 물어볼 수 있는 사람.

these ties. These organizations provide spaces of support that Woo-sung marks as being of greatest importance to talbukin. One NGO, named PSCORE,[58] offers group English lessons on a weekly basis as well as one-to-one tutoring for talbukin in any subject of their choice. Tutors are South Korean or foreign and act on a volunteer basis. Beyond these opportunities for academic extension, the group offers a number of cultural activities on a monthly basis. On one such occasion, organisers of the group's social event had arranged to meet people outside the NGO's offices for lunch. Thirteen people in total huddled close to the hot plates of the tables on a cold January afternoon, introducing themselves one by one, before sharing in a lunch of Korean soups. Among the participants were several South Koreans, a Korean American and six talbukin.

Following introductions and lunch, during which time participants attempted to get to know each other, the group braved the cold once more, walking to the nearby ice skating rink. The ages of participants at this month's event varied, with older members in their early 30s and the youngest participant having just turned 12. For the most part, many of the North Korean participants had not been in South Korea long. The two youngest members of the group (12 and 19 years old) were humorously referred to by the others as 'Baby North Koreans'. The 19 year old girl, who had spent an extended period of time in China, told me, "My Mandarin is better than my Korean. I'm now in high school, trying to prepare for university. I have big problems with Korean and English." Her younger 'sister' was born in China and had only recently arrived in the south; she was studying Korean as if it was a second language, having been brought up speaking Mandarin in North East China.

They shuffled precariously around the ice skating rink, holding on to each of my arms as I attempted to act as both rudder and shield, navigating our way through the throngs of more capable, and less careful skaters. Ji-ryang Shin, marginally more skilled on the ice than the two young girls, took the hand of the youngest girl; we thus formed a four person chain, causing havoc for those behind us.

Ji-ryang and I would meet often, I had got to know her through the group's mentoring program. She explained to me that since we last met,

> My mother is still very depressed and constantly speaking of returning to North Korea. My mother's aunts and uncles in North Korea don't want to come to South Korea. They are happy in their home in the North. They live near the China/North Korea border and can make a living trading with Chinese businessmen. I have told her that if

[58] 성공적인 통일을 만드는 사람들.

she still feels that way in five years, I will pay the bribes for her to return to North Korea[59] (Discussion with Ji-ryang Shin: arrived in South Korea 2008).

Her mother had not been enjoying life in South Korea since she arrived the previous year; she was lonely and missed her family in the North. Her mother's loneliness and frustration was not atypical of the feelings many talbukin experienced, being out of place and far away from home.

The cultural events organized by PSCORE, whether ice skating, going to the cinema or arts and crafts in Insadong[60] offered safe space in which sharing problems, discussing family life and shared feeding created closer relations between participants in a community largely made up of North Koreans. Extensive time spent in the talbukin community had taught me that there was not a great deal of opportunities for people to open up about their problems. For many people from North Korea, it was difficult to know who to trust in regards to both the talbukin community and people from South Korea. It is useful here to offer another example to demonstrate how the seemingly mundane holds significance in regards to establishing and maintaining enduring social networks.

I had been invited to attend the wedding of two directors of an NGO in Seoul working with talbukin. Both the bride and groom were originally from North Korea, having arrived separately in the last five years. My friend and I arrived late, pausing only to pay the wedding gift money[61] at the door before taking a seat beside the aisle. The wedding was an intimate affair, punctuated by light heartedness as the bride and groom, both unaccustomed to the South Korean wedding ceremony, on several occasions had to call for help from the wedding assistants as to how to proceed. Knowing that neither the bride nor groom had family in South Korea, I was curious as to the identity of the elderly couples seated where the parents of the celebrants usually sit. Turning to a friend, herself also from North Korea and a regular helper at the organization which both bride and groom worked, I asked, "Who are those older people at the front of the room, sitting in the chairs on each side?" I was informed that, "They are the parents of the bride. You see that man [referring to the elderly man, seated with a women

[59] Conversations with North Koreans have alerted me to the fact that, in regards to the movement of people across the Chinese/North Korean border, anything is possible with money. In the case of one young man I met, his mother and he had pooled their settlement money to purchase the freedom of his aunt, who had then saved money to have her own child brought out. This had continued until the family numbered ten in South Korea. This was, however, the first time I had heard of someone planning on paying bribes to travel back *into* North Korea.

[60] 인사동 A popular tourist area in downtown Seoul.

[61] 부조

on the right side of the stage], he is the head of a North Korean organization [here in South Korea]. He is very famous among North Korean refugees." "Ah, so they do have family here? I didn't know that." I replied. "Well, no, not really family, you know", my friend quickly corrected herself. The ceremony continued, the bride and groom both kowtowing to both sets of pseudo parents, before the group photos began and the wedding hall staff were once again employed in directing the newlyweds in the technicalities of both the first kiss and the tossing of the bouquet.

The wedding of the couple from North Korea, neither of whom had blood related kin in South Korea, created a new family, it also further strengthened the ties between the newlyweds and the two elderly couples who acted the role of parents. Thirdly, given the intimacy of the wedding, restricted to close friends and persons with whom the couple had established relationships through their NGO work, this moment of flux extended ties between the couple and their guests and between many of the guests themselves, present to witness the transition of two individuals to a married couple. This wedding is a further example of North Korean refugees creating and maintaining social networks that, over time, go beyond networking to function as pseudo kinship ties. It is useful to now turn to examples of manufacturing kinship in religious spaces.

3.1. (2) In spiritual spaces

> "The MokSah Nim[62] in this church is very kind and always wanting to help me, he is like my family, he is a really good man" (Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).
>
> The pastor introduced a couple who had just had a baby. Father, mother and sleeping baby negotiated their way up to the front of the congregation, and were immediately greeted by cooing congregation members, craning their heads for a better look of the new addition to their church. The mother, a woman in her mid- twenties who had migrated from North Korea five years prior, explained that she had been nervous about bringing the baby to worship today, but wanted to introduce her new child to the extended family[63] (Field notes. March 27th 2011).

The above quote is from a young man who had arrived in South Korea without family. His understanding of the relationship between himself and the minister of the small church he attended as being 'Like family' is representative of similar sentiments expressed by both talbukin and South Koreans in regards to the

[62] Pastor, Minister, Cleric.

[63] 한가족/식구.

communities being made and remade in various secular and spiritual spaces.

"We are just like family." This was repeatedly impressed on me in each of the sites in which I participated. The focus in these sites was on inclusion, on creating a feeling of belonging between people who might otherwise be alone. The above excerpt from my field notes, observed at X Church, well known for its large talbukin congregation, illustrates the familial atmosphere that permeates each of the sites. Indeed, each Sunday was a time to renew these bonds. The importance of a familial atmosphere to the members of the congregation of this church was underlined by the church pastor during an outdoor worship[64] in late spring. Following a group prayer session, during which each person joined hands, swaying back and forth as the band played, congregation members gathered together in an open area of the park, unfurling the banner marking the occasion that would be held in front of them during the group photograph. Prior to taking the photograph, a couple nervously shuffled up to the front of the group and, grasping the microphone in two hands, the young man announced, "Next weekend we are getting married and we would like everyone to come. We want to share this time with you" (Field notes. March 27th 2011). Passing the microphone to his bride to be, she reiterated the invitation before handing centre stage back to the pastor. The pastor once again requested, "I hope to see as many people as possible at this wedding next weekend, after all," he added, "We are all kin here."[65] The imposition to attend the young couple's impending nuptials was firmly couched in the idiom of kinship.

This was the common manner in which requests were made, church members were discussed using the familial terms, as a consequence, it was expected that mutual support be granted when required. It is important to note, however, the gap that inevitably exists between verbalizing 'Family' and people actually acting and thinking as if they are family. The pastor framing his invocation in familial terms did not mean that he, nor others, believed they were actually related. In regards to religious groups in particular, there are a lot of impositional statements aimed at talbukin, these are usually framed in the family idiom and accompanied by the promise of material rewards should the individual become part of the group. For the most part, it is difficult to say whether individuals actually believe in this idiom. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that the language of the group makes use of familial expressions which prepare the ground for creating and nurturing ties between individuals, building webs of emotional and instrumental

[64] 야외 예배
[65] "우리는 친척입니다."

obligation that, over time, have the potential to develop into deeper feelings of intimacy. The gap between announcing, "We are all kin here", and actually feeling a pseudo kinship with others could be traversed through ongoing interaction over a long period of time. For some, on the other hand, it might never happen as they might choose to leave the group. But for those who stayed, the invocation that they were part of a family would prove to carry greater emotional and practical import over time.

Bonds of kinship were continuously stressed between congregation members, thereby emphasising solidarity between individuals and providing a sense of comfort necessary for combating isolation and loneliness. Each week, following a sermon interspersed with prayer and song, new visitors to the church would be invited to move to the front of the hall and introduce themselves to the congregation. The nervousness of the new members was telling as they would stumble through their introduction, "My name is Ji-won, I was born in Cheongjin and I my Hanawon graduation number is 93" [66] (Field notes. March 27th 2011). Each person would continue in the same way until, after the final person had finished their introduction, the congregation would join hands and sing a welcoming song. One young man, particularly touched by the scene during a Sunday morning service, declared to the congregation, "This is just like my family [back in North Korea]."

After the new arrivals were officially welcomed into the 'family' the congregation would break off into smaller groups. In units of between 5-8 people, these smaller groups would be the support groups for individuals. Discussions would begin on topics related to the day's sermon but questions would inevitably be connected back to the lives of each person. When was a time when you felt envy? What can we learn about our own lives from the story of the merchants in the temple? This was as much a time for people to reflect on their own lives as it was for discussion of the day's narrative. Bible study was followed by lunch. Queuing up around the stainless steel vats, each person would bring back a plate loaded with rice, gimchee, seaweed and a small portion of meat.[67] Mealtime would last around twenty minutes, before members of each group would begin removing the leftover food and conversation would turn to more personal matters.

[66] Each 'graduating class' from Hanawon, the government run institute created to prepare North Korean refugees for life in South Korea, is assigned a graduating number, This is based on the month they left the institute, graduating classes finishing at the end of each month.

[67] In North Korea, meat is a scarce commodity. As a result, many of the North Korean refugees I spoke with are not accustomed to eating meat and many are unable to digest it. This I discovered through frequently eating with North Korean friends, many of whom would avoid the large barbeque meals which so many South Koreans enjoy.

Each person would be called upon to explain something they were particularly worried about, or, perhaps something they needed help with such as troubles at school or difficulties with making friends. This would be written down on a prayer sheet and members of the group would be requested to pray for that person. "I'm having trouble finishing my film project; I don't know how I can create English subtitles." "I'm worried about my mother, she is new to South Korea and I'm concerned she will be lonely." "I'm having trouble talking to my seniors at school and I don't know how to ask for their help." These requests for prayer had multiple purposes; firstly, to vent particular problems that a person might be feeling; secondly to elicit help from anyone that could offer it; thirdly, to reinforce the feeling of group solidarity, the idea that through sharing with members of the church family, problems could be solved; and, fourthly, to reaffirm the power of faith and the importance of asking God for help through prayer. Older members of the group would act as councillors, dispensing advice to those uncertain on how to deal with the issues arising in their lives. As such, these prayer group meetings held instrumental significance to the participants, as practical information on how to handle problems would be proffered by those who had been through the same experiences. Meetings such as these, which take place in Heaven church and X Church, often represent one of the few relationships that exist for newly arrived talbukin outside of the North Korean refugee community. These relationships are, therefore, valued as a source of help and whether with representatives of an organisation or with private individuals they are relied on as a source of information and resources. This church was not unique in creating a familial environment in which intimate connections could be made, as further field work in several other sites demonstrated.

The service in Heaven church was never as long as in the other churches I attended. Following the service each Sunday evening, participants would mingle, enjoying snacks and orange juice, before making their way to a nearby restaurant for dinner. It is important to note, especially in the case of Heaven church, the significance of activities arranged outside of the church and how these contributed to creating an environment where people were able to build long lasting relationships. Two occasions are of particular relevance, firstly a spring time trip up Nam Mountain in Seoul and secondly a group trip to the theatre.

The pastor of the small church decided it would be nice to take a trip up nearby Nam Mountain. Members of the church who had time made their way to the bottom of the mountain in several taxis, subsequently queuing up for a gondola ticket. Several members of the group were new to the church, indeed, new to South Korea. This trip gave them an opportunity to talk with other people and to

see the famed Nam Mountain.[68] The group then traced the road lined with cherry blossom trees back down the side of the mountain until finding a restaurant. Over dinner I spoke with one young lady who had recently arrived in South Korea. She explained to me, "I moved here recently with my mother, in North Korea I was a nurse but now that I am here, I have to start again. It's my dream to learn English, retrain in South Korea as a nurse and then continue my studies to become a doctor"[69] (Field notes 24th April 2011).

The trip to Nam Mountain, as explained briefly above, was significant in that it expedited the incorporation of new members to the group. During the trip up the mountain and the group dinner that followed, participants had a chance to meet new people and talk about their lives outside of the church. The process of becoming is not a fixed state and, while the church service itself is an important time for forming bonds between people, activities outside of the church also offer a stage on which people develop deeper relationships with each other.

During another hectic weekend, which had taken us outside of Seoul, Woo-sung and I arrived back from a wedding and rushed to the theatre where we had arranged to meet the pastor of Heaven church. We had been invited to attend the opening of a show with the other members of the congregation. It was to be the first outing since the trip to Namsan. We arrived late, the pastor stepping outside of the theatre to hand us our tickets. We crept in and found our seats, settling in for the performance.

After the show, the group decided to go for dinner, we walked a few blocks to a noodles and dumpling restaurant.[70] Both Woo-sung and I asked to pay for dinner, but, the pastor insisted on paying himself, explaining, "You don't need to worry,

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[68] 남산. This mountain is centrally located in Seoul. Prior to the beautification campaign in the 1990s it was covered in apartment buildings constructed for foreigners. It was also home to the KCIA, the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. It is now a popular place for sightseeing, being home to Seoul Tower. North Korean refugees used to be taken to Nam Mountain prior to being released into South Korean society as it was considered by the Korean government as a prime spot for viewing the ultra modern city sprawled out below. This ended when the number of North Korean refugees made this custom unfeasible.

[69] This young lady also told me that as with many other North Korean refugees, the first purchases she made upon receiving her 20 million won settlement package from the government was a large Samsung flat screen TV and a Samsung smart phone. It is not unreasonable to say that there exists a custom of conspicuous consumption amongst the talbukin community, with ownership of luxury items taken as tangible evidence of their new, modern, South Korean identities. For more on the conspicuous consumption of talbukin, refer to an article in the *Choson Ilbo*, Defector's Material Obsessions Raising Concern in Seoul. (http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/06/15/2011061501086.html). For more information on the conspicuous consumption of immigrant communities see Kibria. *Family Tightrope*. 1993: 75.

[70] 국수와 만두 식당.

we are family after all"[71] (Field notes 1st May 2011). As had become a common experience, the fact that we were 'family' was cited as the reason for both Woo-sung and I being treated to an evening at the theatre and the meal that followed. The feeling of being taken care of was unmistakable; "This church [Heaven church] doesn't give money, the charity of this church is love, [I think] this system is much better" Explained Woo-sung (Interview with Woo-sung).

As noted in X Church, the use of familial terms contributed towards the creation of an environment that allows for the developing of ties strengthened through pecuniary and material transactions. Layers of indebtedness are just one way in which the relationships are made stronger and enduring. These layers of obligation exist between talbukin groups, whether in churches, NGOs or university groups,[72] and outside of the North Korean refugee community, between talbukin and South Koreans.

Chang-soon Kim explains, in reference to families divided during and following the Korean War,

> For many North Korean refugees such kinship ties were broken by the wars and the partition of the nation. Some have tried to fulfill that relationship by assembling and mobilising their kin members wherever they have been relocated. Reflecting the importance of kinship to Koreans, those without kin group affiliation [as in the case of many talbukin] *have created pseudo, quasi, or fictional kinships*, basing their ties on having attended the same school or coming from the same prefecture. Fictional kinship is much more prevalent among the North Korean refugees in the South (Kim 1988: 42). (Italics added).

Kim, writing in 1988, was explaining the creation of pseudo kinship ties amongst the first generation of divided families and North Korean refugees that occurred as a result of the Korean War. His explanation is equally as valid in regards to the newest expression of Korea's fragmented politico-geographic division: talbukin. The examples given from the two churches offer an idea of how, in religious environments, people from North Korea recreate social networks facilitating the development of strong instrumental and emotional ties.

The institutionalized 'incorporation' process, a pertinent part of joining each of the larger religious groups, is explicit in its invocation of making family. This family focus, however, is by no means restricted to organizations.

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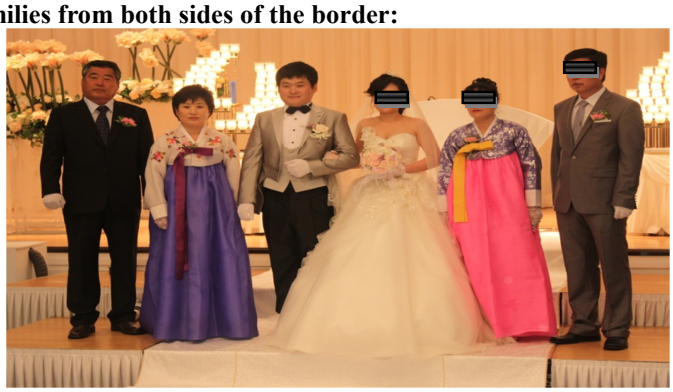
71 "괜찮아요, 우리는 가족이에요."

72 탈북학생 동아리

3.1. (3) In a family wedding

For a further example, it is useful to once again turn to the experiences of Woo-sung, a North Korean refugee who, at the time of researching this thesis had recently graduated from a prestigious university in Seoul and was preparing both for employment and graduate school. Woo-sung had once again been asked to attend a wedding, this time of the sister of a woman with whom he had graduated Hanawon. The wedding, however, was not in Seoul. This meant a very early start on the Sunday morning and a long bus ride east.

A wedding of families from both sides of the border:



The bride and groom were not ready to begin the ceremony when we entered the large wedding hall. The wedding was between a North Korean woman and a South Korean man. Woo-sung and I were greeted by the sister of the bride and, along with several other family members, we moved up to the front of the lavishly decorated wedding hall. I noticed that we were seated conspicuously near the front, surrounded by the sisters and cousins of the bride. Feeling uncomfortable, in such a position of honour,[73] I enquired to my friend as to why we had been seated there. Woo-sung, having already been described by the youngest sister of the bride as "The adopted son of our mother",[74] answered without hesitation, "She is my sister [the sister of the bride], we graduated Hanawon together. We sit here because we are family and this is where family sit. Those girls there [indicating to the three children seated at the same table] are cousins and the three women are

[73] In a contemporary Korean wedding, the parents of the bride sit on the right of the aisle the parents of the groom sit to the left. Directly behind the parents are the immediate family members. Seating then runs in a less rigidly adhered to hierarchy of intimacy from the front of the hall to the back. For a more comprehensive account of marriage customs in Korea, see Laura Kendall's *Getting Married in Korea* (1996)

[74] "오빠는 우리 엄마의 양아들이에요"

sisters of the bride" (Field notes 1st May 2011). In this case, there already existed two levels of connectivity between Woo-sung and the bridal party; the family of the bride and Woo-sung were from the same hometown in North Korea. The sister of the bride and Woo-sung had graduated Hanawon together and maintained contact ever since. Both Woo-sung and the sisters of the bride were very close to each other, emotionally speaking; this was made salient in the language used to describe each other and their actions towards one another as they fussed over each other's well-being during and after the ceremony. The tie between Woo-sung and his adopted family had taken a long time to develop. Woo-sung and the sister of the bride had arrived in South Korea at the same time and met in Hanawon. They had learnt about South Korean society together while in the government centre and had then been permitted to enter into the wider society. They had shared experiences and helped each other during the first years of their settlement and when her family arrived in South Korea, Woo-sung got to know them and did what he could to help. They bonded over their common origins and over their shared outsider status and they shared information that would facilitate adaptation in South Korea. Years of visiting together and giving and receiving information had contributed towards an intense feeling of solidarity, trust and mutual understanding between Woo-sung and the sister of the bride and her family. This relationship was imbued with feelings of mutual dependence and enduring 'jeong'. Woo-sung and the sister of the bride had traversed the gap that exists between verbalizing, "We are family" and acting, feeling and understanding themselves as a kind of kin.

The language used by the people with whom I conducted field work, laid the ground for individuals to become closer and create relationships that went beyond mere friendship to something more intimate. Kim understands the use of kinship terms among members of a group to be the "Most important mechanism for promoting a sense of belonging to a kin group…[encompassing]…the entire membership of the kin group" (Kim 1988: 41). Paul Connerton (1989) adds to this, arguing that community is initiated when pronouns of solidarity are repeatedly pronounced. In pronouncing 'we' as well as other incorporating and equalizing language, participants in each of the sites were contributing towards binding individuals together. In the case of Woo-sung and his pseudo sister, the intimacy felt between them had taken a long time to develop and had done so under unique circumstances as both had arrived without family of their own. Both had chosen to maintain their relationship and had spent years building trust through continuous emotional and instrumental support. Their relationship transcended friendship, moving towards Carsten's (1997) concept of a deeply felt pseudo kinship.

Further to the language of family, it is useful to look at other significant moments during the pseudo kinship making process and how they also contribute to a sense of solidarity and the creation of a community.

3.2 Significant moments during times of community building

This section will put under the microscope specific times during which pseudo kinship networks are created. Once again drawing on field work and interview data, this section offers examples of how seemingly mundane actions such as, eating together, visiting, exchanging gifts and the taking of photographs facilitate group solidarity and expedite the coming together of individuals.

3.2. (1) Eating together

> Hye-jin's mother had cooked a lot of food as usual, the legs of the small, fold out table strained under the weight of potatoes, fish, pork, two kinds of egg dish and a kind of pancake with vegetables cooked into it. This was not normal South Korean pajun[75] I was assured, Hye-jin's mother would often emphasise the fact that we were about to enjoy North Korean style food. I took a couple of potato pancakes from the centre of the table and loaded up my bowl, hiding the still steaming rice beneath. Hye-jin's mother, dissatisfied at the quantity I had taken then added to my plate with three more. Hye-jin tried one herself and exclaimed, "These are not delicious." Her mother looked at her scowling and replied, "Go back and live in North Korea for a month and tell me that's not delicious." Woo-sung and I laughed quietly, in between mouthfuls of food (Field notes April 10th 2011).

Koreans, it seems, place particular importance on eating together.[76] The sharing of food is an almost ritualized act. The food, a mixture of spicy, bubbling broths, sweet meats with pickled cabbage and radishes is placed in the centre of the table. Each person uses their steel spoon and chopsticks to lift the food from the communal plates onto their smaller, individual bowls, at least one of which is filled to the brim with white fluffy rice. Family and friends feed each other particularly choice pieces of meat or potato, lifting bite sized pieces of food clamped between chopsticks to the mouths of those either side of them. Serving food to each other underlines the mutually felt intimacy imbued in the act of sharing food. When drinking alcohol, glasses are swapped between close friends,

[75] 파전. A kind of South Korean pancake usually made with green onion, potato, pumpkin and/or seafood.

[76] I recall one South Korean friend of mine telling me that whenever she saw a person eating alone, she felt so sad that on occasion, she would offer to join them for the duration of the meal. Although not all Koreans will be quite so willing to approach and eat with complete strangers, her attitude really underlined the fact that, for Koreans, eating is something to be enjoyed in communion with others. A similar point is raised in regards to the Nuer of Southern Sudan, where, according to Sharon Hutchinson, it is, "Shameful to be found eating alone in front of a stranger" (in Carsten 2001: 60).

pouring and drinking from the other's cup emphasising a familiarity that transcends boundaries of language.[77] Food and drink mixes with saliva, as the under floor heating warms the bodies of each participant. The meal continues unabated until all participants are too full to continue. Inevitably there is more food than required, the remainder is sealed up and placed in the fridge for the next meal.

Woo-sung and I would regularly eat in the home of Hye-jin and her mother. Dinner would be served around seven in the evening; we would arrive and hand over whatever we had brought for that evening, Korean custom demanding that one not turn up empty handed.[78] The small table would be erected in the middle of the living room, next to the large flat screen television and we would sit cross-legged while the food was brought through from the kitchen by Hye-jin and her mother. Occasionally dinner would be accompanied by beer and sometimes one of Hye-jin's mother's friends would join us. "Eating together", explains Carsten, "creates shared blood, that is, kinship" (Carsten 1997: 4). Feeding creates shared substance, while talking together, exchanging news and information during and after the meal contributes to constructing relatedness.

For a newly arrived family to South Korea, the knowledge that Woo-sung had accumulated in regards to their new environment was indispensible. "How do we fill out this form for Hye-jin's school? How do we organize after school tuition? What happens when Hey-jin has to go on school trips? What is the easiest way to organize insurance? How do I deal with the social worker when she comes to visit?" Meal times were a time for asking questions about events and problems that had arisen. Soo-min reiterates this point with regards to newly arrived talbukin whom she has worked with at PSCORE;

> A lot of conversation between talbukin focuses on how to live in South Korea. For example, where can I find a place to study? Which place is giving discounts? Where can I find a scholarship? Which is a good company for me to apply to? What does this organization offer me? How much is the salary of that organization? Which university professor is less demanding? Where can I find cheap books for class? What is the difference between the South Korean political parties? (Interview with Soo-min: arrived South Korea 2002).

Eating together on such a regular basis for Woo-sung, Hye-jin and Hye-jin's

[77] These days, the swapping of glasses when drinking alcohol is a custom that seems to be harder to find in South Korea, particularly among the younger generation. On a recent trip to the Korean Autonomous Province of Jilin, in North East China, however, I found this custom to be alive and well among old and young ethnic Koreans.

[78] "빈 손으로 가면 안돼요." Do not turn up empty handed.

mother was a time to renew ties, to discuss the week's events and to maintain a relationship in which pseudo kinship roles were acted out. Woo-sung, having befriended the family's eldest daughter[79] shortly after arrival in South Korea, was the source of advice deemed essential for learning about their new home. Although not made explicit, the relationship between Hye-jin and Woo-sung appeared to be one of daughter-father, with Hye-jin asking for advice, help with homework and even pocket money. Further to this, between Woo-sung and Mrs. Lee there seemed to exist a pseudo-marital relationship. That is not to say there was a physical side to their relationship, rather that Woo-sung offered a strong male figure in the house, able to solve problems and proffer advice necessary for Mrs Lee to negotiate the everyday difficulties of her new environment. For Woo-sung, a young man without family in South Korea, it was both comforting and convenient to be part of this family atmosphere, with food prepared for him and a place to go and relax outside of his own home.

According to several kinship scholars, (Carsten 1997, Carsten et al. 2000., Holy 1996) the continuous visiting I observed between talbukin contributes to the creation and maintenance of relationships where the focus is not on substance-based connections, which do not exist in these cases, rather, on the continuously made, evolving bonds of relatedness. Strong bonds between people not related by substance are created and maintained by visiting, sharing food and exchanging goods and information (Carsten 1997). This kind of environment was not unique to the situation of Woo-sung and his neighbours, as would be observed during on-going field work.

The importance of food sharing in creating and maintaining ties can also be seen in the meetings that take place in NGOs and church groups. The sharing of a meal would be an integral part of every meeting; it is a time to meet new people and a time for talbukin to share experiences in their new home.

> People were beginning to disperse following the group photograph. I was called into a room attached to the main hall where the presentations had recently finished. Three long tables were piled high with food. I found myself a space on the warm floor, opposite a young woman whom I had spotted previously at several other meetings. The girl who had been minding the desk encouraged everyone to start eating, "Please, start, it's North Korean food. The women who made it are from North Korea and this is all cooked in the North Korean style." This sparked a barrage of questions from the people gathered round the table on the authenticity of the food, sceptics being silenced when we were introduced to the chefs, three middle aged talbukin women, themselves

[79] This daughter was no longer living in South Korea at the time of writing this thesis.

about to sit down to eat at the next table. People began introducing themselves to each other and swapping *Facebook*[80] details (Field notes April 23rd 2011).

The excerpt above, taken from a meeting of a North Korean human rights group, emphasised the significance of the food as a focal point for conversation. As the meeting drew to a close, the air in the hall where the meeting was held was already full of the smells of pork, fish, peppers and potato, and as members of the group moved to spaces on the floor around the tables there was an anticipation that was almost palpable. The special nature of food cooked in the North Korean manner lent an air of importance to the group meal. Sutton hints at the significance of serving food from home, explaining, "There is an imagined community implied in the act of eating food "from home" while in exile, in the embodied knowledge that others are eating the same food" (Sutton 2007: 84). These are concepts widely discussed in Laura Bear's rendering of Anglo-Indian genealogies in Kharagpur. Laura Bear articulates the importance of surroundings to Sri Lankan Muslim refugees, who, "...have been resettled only a relatively short distance from their original homes. Their surroundings thus constantly evoke the sights and smells of homes to which they are unable to return to" (in Carsten 2007: 19). The tastes of home hold special significance for Anglo-Indians, as it does for North Koreans who have fled to the South. Food is a sign of identity for both of these communities for whom home is so close and yet out of reach. Food is also a tool used to build community, as "Food also makes bonds between people in households...[to the extent that] non-related individuals were incorporated into households through the medium of food" (ibid: 41).

The meeting had already yielded surprises,[81] yet it was the shared meal that allowed individuals to sit down together and talk more openly. People of similar age sat with each other, initially the only sounds were the clink, clink of steel chopsticks and the crunching of the spicy, pickled radish. As explained above, however, conversation was stimulated by the special character of the food. Many of the participants in this group were also members of other organizations, underlining the thick, diffuse nature of groups constituting the talbukin community.

"Have we met before? I've seen you before haven't I?"[82] These were common

[80] The American networking site, *Facebook*, is used in conjunction with the South Korean equivalent, *Cyworld* by South Koreans and talbukin alike.

[81] During the closing speech of the meeting the speaker introduced a very young girl, perhaps four years of age, to the audience. The girl was dressed in a pretty outfit but was hesitant to come out from behind the leg of what I thought was her mother. It was explained to me that this group had raised money to purchase her freedom from North Korea. Her mother had come shortly after and was in the final stages of her education in Hanawon.

[82] 우리 만나 본 적 있나요? X 단체에서 만나지 않았어요?

questions asked, chopsticks in hand, mouths full of rice. "Which university do you go to?" "When did you finish Hanawon?" "Which area do you live in?" Questions were not so much fired across the table as they were delicately proffered in between bites. For those who were not already acquainted, invitations to attend the next meeting were extended and contact details were exchanged. After the formalities of the group meetings, mealtime was a welcome occasion, during which individuals could direct the flow of conversation to more personal matters. The process of cooking and eating is a way in which strangers and outsiders can become incorporated into a group. In particular, for talbukin who live alone, or for whom eating with family is not possible the shared meal is a time of utmost importance for talbukin who participate in group meetings.

3.2. (2) Visiting

> In the absence of clear geographical boundaries as well as powerful community organizations, the ethnic community life of Vietnamese-Americans had a localistic quality. However, informal social networks, based on ties of kinship and friendship, did connect them to other Vietnamese-Americans living in different neighbourhoods…these informal social networks functioned as powerful conduits of resources and information among Vietnamese-Americans in the area (Kibria 1993: 27).

Further to the more formal, structured and semi-structured meetings organized through church groups and NGOs, it is useful to cast an eye to the significance of informal meetings, house to house visits and group get-togethers taking place in the homes of talbukin to explain how people from North Korea create and maintain pseudo kinship ties. As Kibria (1993) explains, informal social networks function as "Powerful conduits of resources and information" (Kibria 1993: 27). In the same vein, this section will illuminate the importance of less structured, informal visiting to the creation of self made networks and sustainable relationships. Through visiting other talbukin, relationships are created with a more personal quality, offering resources of a similar nature to those available to the Vietnamese migrants with whom Kibria worked.

> Woo-sung had been preparing lunch for about an hour. He had also spent at least 30,000 won purchasing the food to cook the meal. This included a variety of vegetables, noodles, seafood and chicken. He seemed a little uncomfortable about the impending arrival of the guests, exclaiming with concern, "I don't know why they are coming to lunch, why do they want to come to my house?!" The two South Korean women, both members of the Catholic Church that Woo-sung attends, arrived and sat on the floor of the lounge while he finished preparing the food, which was then brought through on two tables. The menu today, 'Cola Chicken', a dish he told us he learnt to

> cook in China. Conversation revolved around his current job-seeking status, work related to the Church, the girls from the group home and his plans for the future (Field notes April 22nd 2011).

The visit by members of the church to Woo-sung's home was significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, as stated, it required significant pecuniary investment on behalf of the visitors and the host. Woo-sung had spent his morning preparing the food. This included spending money to purchase the required ingredients. The visitors brought a large fruit pie with them and some fresh fruit to serve after the main meal. It is interesting to note that prior to departing, one of the visitors discreetly gave Woo-sung some money to cover the expenses of the meal. This kind of reciprocity, a common feature of the kind of relationships being created in the talbukin community, will be discussed further below.

Continuous visiting between talbukin allows for the creation of relationships with a deeply personal quality:

It is also significant to note the topics discussed during the visit. The visitors, people with strong connections in the Catholic community in Seoul, were genuinely interested in how Woo-sung, a young man living without family in South Korea, was coping with his living situation. "How are your studies coming along?" "Are you preparing to find a job?" Do you need any help organizing yourself?" Do you have a girlfriend?" Words of concern and offers of help were not empty gestures and information was relayed back to other members of the church, in particular those involved with organizing support for talbukin and the church sponsored children's home. In the same vein, discussion of the ongoing volunteer work with the YHW group, the girl's home and the children's home gave opportunities to plan new projects and maintain the impetus

necessary to continue such ventures. It was also significant that relationships were being maintained in a sphere outside of the formal boundaries of the church, the church related NGO group or the children's home. A home visitation represented something more personal, hence Woo-sung's concern over why it was required in the first place. An account of a book club meeting at the home of a talbukin offers another example of home visitations and an insight into how talbukin employ their own initiative to come together and share food and information:

> I arrived at the apartment where this month's book club was due to be held. I was led into the lounge where Bo-hyun Pak, the book club leader, introduced me to a nun whom she referred to as her mother. It had been a while since Bo-hyun had left the girl's home and her 'mother' had come to visit and check how things were going in her daughter's new apartment. Bo-hyun's 'mother' explained to me, "I actually work and live in a group home for young North Korean girls who have come to South Korea without any family." She went on to explain, "About 50 girls from North Korea have been through our residence. It is run by Catholic nuns. When the girls are old enough, they move out of the residence and find their own place to live, either in a one room or in a dormitory"[83] (Field notes February 27th 2011).

The description above, taken from field notes, offers more clarity as to the nature of the existing pseudo kinship ties between members of the talbukin community. Staying with nuns of the Catholic Church in Seoul has a direct effect on the religious choices of the six-seven girls who stay there at any one time, and it will inevitably guide them in their future career choices.[84] They sleep, eat, study and live together and, as is alluded to by the fact that the girls continue to volunteer with church connected projects after leaving the home, these ties continue to form an important part of their lives.

The fact that Bo-hyun and the other girls continued to refer to the elderly nun as their "mother" was significant. But perhaps more pertinent was the body language between the girls and the nun. Seeming to be completely comfortable with each other, they would brush each other's and their 'mother's' hair. They would hold each other's hands, straighten the creases in each other's clothes using their fingers and when sitting down to eat the conversation was without formality, exuding a familial intimacy. These girls, for the most part, did not have family in

[83] It was also explained to me that in her opinion most of the work about North Korea is political and does not pay enough attention to the most important factor-the people. "Before adaptation is possible psychological adjustment to South Korean society must take place", she emphasized. She stressed, above all, the importance of mutual cooperation.

[84] Through discussions with some of the girls who lived in the home I learnt that they are under no obligation to attend Mass or even become Catholic. However, those who stay at the boarding house for any length of time tend to take with them the Catholic faith, which they continue to follow long after leaving to live on their own.

South Korea and, as with Jin-hee (see chapter 1), had been taken into the girl's home and cared for as family. Their relationship with the nuns developed an intimacy that can be explained using the Korean concept of *jeong*.[85] Relationships between the girls and the nuns often started with difficulties, as was seen in the opening vignette of Jin-hee (chapter one). Over time, however, ties were formed between individuals in the group home that encouraged continuing relationships after the girls left the home. The continued relationship with the nuns is profound in that relationships built in the group home are underpinned by obligations of filial piety.[86] Inviting their 'mother' to eat with them in their homes and continued participation in Catholic Church-sponsored volunteer activities can be seen through the lens of reciprocity; girls of the group home who have left to begin new lives embark upon the life-long process of giving back to their elders, who have themselves sacrificed so much for them.

Taking another look at the visitation of the nun and talbukin friends to Bo-hyun's home, the significance of the fact that all participants were talbukin should also be taken into account. Conversation ebbed and flowed from everyday topics to more culturally specific topics meaningful to people from North Korea. Without prompting from me, discussion was raised on life prior to leaving the North, differences between South Koreans and North Koreans and the contrasting political systems of the two Koreas.

Through regular meetings with talbukin in a variety of environments I observed a common bond underpinning the relationships between North Korean refugees. This could be observed each time they met, in the discussions they shared, the consultations and problem solving sessions in which they informally participated, the food they cooked together, the linguistic code switching employed, and the jokes they made at each other's expense.

> The North Korean way of talking is different to the South Korean way of talking. There are different meanings in the way people speak, the words are different and the way of writing is different. The meaning and the words are really different as well. For example there are a lot of words in South Korea that we [talbukin] don't use (Interview with Soo-min: arrived South Korea 2003).

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[85]情'정'. This concept is difficult to translate into English. Perhaps it is best understood as affection, or intimacy with mutual ties of obligation. For a more nuanced understanding see Kim (1992) *품앗이와 情의 人間關係* (Pumasi and the Human Relations of Jeong).

[86]孝道효도 The concept of 'Hyo-do' forms the bed rock of Confucian culture. Respect for elders, in particular for parents, in considered as the primary duty of every person. Kim explains that, "The accounts of filial piety in Korean society can be easily found in folk tales about the feeding and care of aged parents. Included were stories of sons who fed their own flesh and blood to their ailing parents." (Kim. 1988: 39) For a more detailed account of Korean ancestor worship and the obligations of children to their parents see Janelli and Janelli, *Ancestor Worship in Korea* (1982).

"North Korean humour," according to one participant at the meal, "is different to the South. We understand each other, we feel more comfortable." Jokes are framed in a linguistic and cultural 'code' that is familiar to people from North Korea. Participants use North Korean dialect to make fun of each other on topics related to life prior to, and after defection. There is a feeling of kinship that arises during the meal, in the chicken stew that everybody shares, in the jokes and jibes that send us all reeling across the heated floor and in the language of family which is used to describe each other– big brother, big sister, mother and aunt.

Home visitations form an important part of the kinship making process. Further to the process of visiting and sharing meals, the importance of reciprocity in creating and maintaining connections between talbukin also needs to be considered.

3.2. (3) Exchanging goods and cycles of debt.

"Many North Korean students who are in South Korea face a number of financial difficulties. YHW group offers some financial benefits for those who come and participate on a regular basis. We give these students 150,000 won a month as a kind of scholarship" (Interview with Woo-sung). Both secular and church groups offer scholarships and stipends for talbukin who are living in South Korea. For many, the decision to attend a particular group is based more on the amount of money tendered than on a deep desire for spiritual salvation. Marcel Mauss suggested that the gift is never 'free'; three obligations– to give; to receive; and to reciprocate– bind the giver and receiver into an unending cycle of obligation in which to refuse the gift is to reject the social bond (Mauss (1950) 1990: 39-41). With this in mind, ongoing, strategic exchange within the talbukin community, manifest in the movement of small gifts such as food, plants and minor pecuniary transactions, should also be regarded as creating overlapping, thick networks between individuals, and individuals and groups.

Strategies of exchange employed by individuals in the talbukin community can be seen as 'survival strategies' (Stack 1974). On-going systems of borrowing and lending enable individuals to survive in an environment of uncertainty.[87] In the midst of fluid and continuously changing relationships individuals become bound

[87] Stack also investigates the "Adaptive functions of sexual unions". Through my field work, I learned it was not uncommon for North Korean women who came to South Korea without a male partner to marry as soon as possible to a South Korean man. This was done to guarantee some security and is an example of the "Adaptive functions of sexual unions" discussed by Stack (Stack (1974)1997:24).

to each other in relationships of co-dependence. These relationships exist as an integral part of the talbukin community as individuals "become enmeshed in a domestic web of a large number of [blood-based and fictive] kinfolk who can be called upon for help and who can bring others into the network" (ibid: 44). For North Korean refugees in South Korea, this larger social network is essential for both economic and emotional support. Furthermore, as can also be seen in the talbukin community, the labour that goes into the making and maintaining of these networks requires a great deal of continuous commitment between individuals.

Whether in a secular or spiritual setting, within the talbukin community, gift giving is an integral component of manufacturing pseudo kinship networks, tying participants into a difficult-to-escape web of obligation. The list below details fifteen of the thirty three articles recorded in an investigation into the 'life histories' of the objects in the home of Woo-sung, who kindly allowed his personal belongings to be laid bare.[88] This exercise was premised on the assumption that as well as eating together and visiting each other, the ties that connect members of the talbukin community are created and maintained through continuous exchange. This has both an instrumental purpose– if someone needs something that you do not, you can give it to them– and a socially significant purpose, creating bonds between people who have none.

The history of objects in the household of Woo-sung (arrived in South Korea 2004):

1. **The television:** The TV came from my North Korean aunt's house. [89]
2. **Large picture of a waterfall scene:** This is from when I came to South Korea. My police minder gave me this.[90] He was very kind and gave me some other things as well.
3. **Low chest of drawers:** From the North Korean aunt.
4. **Stereo System:** This is from my friend, also from North Korea. He had that player four years ago, he went to Britain and he asked me if I needed something to listen to music with.
5. **Low fold away table #1:** This is from my North Korean friend. Perhaps I've had it for five years**.**
6. **Low fold away table #2:** This is from my Chinese friend. I've had it for five months.
7. **Large fridge/freezer and Microwave:** North Korean aunt.

[88] This exercise was used by Carol Stack in her study of the 'Acquisition of Goods' among residents of 'The Flats'. Details of how Stack conducted her own 'Object's Life Histories', is detailed in Appendix B of *All Our Kin* (1974).

[89] It was interesting that Woo-sung referred to two women in his life using the epithet 'Aunt'. When asked how he would refer to these women in Korean, however, he explained that he would use, 'Ajumma', a more neutral term than the English 'Aunt'.

[90] According to Woo-sung, every North Korean who comes to South Korea has, for a time, a police officer whose job it is to "Take care of them". Roy Grinker (1998) confirms this fact, explaining, "the defector is assigned a personal security officer, who keeps close contact with the defector for a period of at least two years" (Grinker. 1998: 237).

8. **Pots and pans:** Some I bought and some I got from the aunt[91] from the Catholic Church.
9. **Bed:** From my Chinese friend. I have had it for about 4 months
10. **Book shelf:** It came from the same North Korean friend who went to the UK.
11. **Tea set:** Chinese friends gave this to me when I went to China for travel.
12. **Washing Machine:** North Korean aunt**.**
13. **Laptop:** I bought it from a North Korean friend at my university. He gave me a discount
14. **Clothes:** Some clothes are from church and some are gifts from friends.
15. **Books:** Some books are from Church and some are from groups. Mostly they are gifts.

(Field notes 13th May 2011. The history of objects in the household)

The purpose of this exercise was to track the movement of the belongings of one talbukin who had come to South Korea alone and had, relatively speaking, well developed social networks. The result, it was hoped, would demonstrate the importance of exchange and mutual support among members of the talbukin community in South Korea. Each object in the home was tagged with a number, the following questions were then asked: Where did the object come from? How long has it been in your possession? And, what do you think you will do with it next? In total, thirty three objects were tagged. The following results could be seen:

Table illustrating the origins of objects in subject's home:

Objects given by talbukin friends	12
Objects given by South Korean friends	2
Objects given by Chinese friends	3
Objects bought by oneself	14
Objects bought with the help of talbukin friends	1
Miscellaneous	1

What results can be seen in the distribution of the objects received? Firstly, it is important to note that of thirty three objects selected for investigation,[92] eighteen (55%) had been given by others. Objects given by talbukin friends equate to twelve (36%). "Objects given by Chinese friends" included a tea set, a bed, and a low fold away table. "Miscellaneous" constituted a printer that was a gift from an internet company. "Objects bought by oneself" totalled fourteen (42%). If

[91] A different, South Korean 'Aunt'.

[92] Objects were selected on the criteria somewhat sparingly suggested by Stack (1973). All items of significance were listed, furniture, television, computer, wardrobe, vacuum. Items such as foodstuffs, textbooks, toiletries etcetera, were not listed. For the full list of items, see Appendix A.

we make a comparison of the number of objects given by talbukin friends, with the number of objects given by South Korean friends, we can see a difference of six to one, talbukin friends having given significantly more objects than South Korean friends. It is also important not to overlook the role of institutionalized support for talbukin. Many of the books, pots and pans and clothes were given by members of the Catholic Church.

What conclusions can be drawn from these results? Firstly, it is clear that a majority of objects received were given by talbukin friends. We can make two deductions; that talbukin, with an awareness of the difficulties of each other's living situations, tend to exchange goods and gifts more often. In addition, if we compare "Objects given by talbukin friends" and "Objects bought with the help of talbukin friends", with "Objects given by South Korean friends" and "Objects bought with the help of South Korean friends", we can draw the conclusion that in the case of Woo-sung, and given that his case is not remarkable, most likely in the cases of other talbukin, there is greater cooperation and support within the North Korean refugee community than within the wider South Korean community. Woo-sung explained in regards to two people who helped him,

> [The aunt who gave me many of these things] is from North Korea, we are from the same home town, we knew each other in North Korea and when I came to South Korea some North Korean friends gave me information about her. I then called her and met her. When we met we were like family. I would often meet her at her home and eat with her as well. She was also someone with whom I could celebrate special times.
>
> When her family came to South Korea they moved to a new house, a bigger place and because we are so close she wanted to give me a lot of things. I already had things like a TV and washing machine, but because I bought them myself they weren't very good.
>
> I met my North Korean friend who went to the UK through a group here [in South Korea]. We spent a lot of time together and became very close. When he went to the UK he asked me if I needed anything, anything I wanted I could take. We are still in touch (Interview with Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).

Deductions drawn from the above data are given some weight in Roy Grinker's *Korea and Its Futures* (1998). Grinker points out that defectors have frequent contact with each other, in fact, "Most defectors are close only to other defectors…In addition, they belong to defector organizations designed, organized, and run by people who defected in the 1960s" (Grinker 1998: 238).[93] Secondly,

[93] Since Grinker wrote in 1998 many things have changed. My own fieldwork pointed to the fact that young talbukin are more active in organizations created by other talbukja who have also arrived in the last ten years. Grinker's point that talbukin have regular contact with each other and are mostly only close with each other, seems to hold some truth twelve years on.

it is interesting to note the gifts received from Chinese friends. It is widely documented that an overwhelming majority of talbukin cross the border into China on their way to South Korea. Many learn some Mandarin during their stay in China, so continued relationships with Chinese in South Korea could be considered as the maintenance of transnational networks established prior to and whilst leaving North Korea.

The history of objects in the household exercise was conducted with the purpose of gaining a clearer understanding of the importance of networks and exchange to talbukin who are without family based connections in South Korea. Many of the objects recorded were not going to rest long in the home of the owner. I was assured that most items, such as the television, book shelves, rice cooker and stereo system would be passed on to other people in the future. In her study of the Vietnamese-American community in Philadelphia, Kibria employs the concept of 'patchworking' to describe the "Merging of many different kinds of resources…convey[ing] the often uneven and unplanned quality of member's contributions to the house-hold economy, both in substance and in tempo" (Kibria. 1993: 77). Although 'patchworking' is a useful concept in terms of capturing the ad-hoc nature of migrant sharing strategies, it falls short of adequately expressing the fluid nature of the resources that flow in and out of the lives of migrants such as in the case of the talbukin community in South Korea. It is useful to consider here what I term a *material liminality*[94] characterising the situation of many talbukin. The majority of talbukin arrive in South Korea with very little in the way of personal items.[95] Seung-soo Kim, himself a recent arrival in South Korea, explained his own situation, "I didn't know anyone in China and I had no one to help me. I just left North Korea with nothing but the clothes on my back and a little Chinese money to try and find a broker. Now I look back, I can't believe I did that either!" (Interview with Seung-soo: arrived South Korea 2010).

Money received from the South Korean government is enough to acquire a few personal belongings, but rarely enough for everything required for life in their new homes. Objects are constantly moving back and forth through networks that exist primarily within the talbukin community.[96] Items borrowed and lent, exchanged and given away comprise an ephemeral aspect; they do not belong to the user as such but are part of a state of becoming, in a similar way to how the

[94] Liminality, meaning 'threshold' is a concept developed by Arnold Van Gennep (1909) and developed further by Victor Turner (1967). It refers to a status of being neither here nor there and was primarily used to characterise the initiation rituals of societies.

[95] A majority of talbukin I spoke with left North Korea with nothing more than the clothes on their back.

[96] Recent fieldwork in Northeast China demonstrated the transnational aspects of these networks of exchange, reaching from North Korea, through China and into South Korea.

skin of a snake is vital while it exists but will inevitably be shed, these objects are manifestations of the beginning of a new life in South Korea.[97] As such, the person neither considers these goods to be fully in his/her possession, neither are they so far alienated that they lose their value as items to be passed on and exchanged. These items are valuable for their instrumental worth, but the social capital these objects represent is of far greater importance. The gift is never free, a donated television, however outdated, retains the spirit of being given; it never forgets its origins.[98]

Who exchanges with whom highlights solidarity between persons and underwrites the ongoing relationships that exist between members of a group. The extracts below make explicit several noteworthy aspects of the pseudo kinship network manufacturing process, where exchanging one gift for another is required to ensure balanced relationships are maintained on a sustainable basis:

> The large bag of pickled cabbage[99] and smaller parcel of pork[100] had been untouched since they were exchanged for a box of chocolates. Now, as we prepared to go to the apartment of Hye-jin and her mother, we retrieved them from the depths of the fridge and stuffed them into plastic bags. The uncooked food was presented to the mother of Hye-jin, who exclaimed, as seemed to be the ritual, that she did not need it, before finding space in her own fridge (Field notes. April 15th 2011).

> Woo-sung, Hye-jin and I wasted no time in tearing into the food. There was a variety of cabbage, some of which had been mixed with pork to create a mouth watering dish that sat steaming in the centre of the low table. Both the cabbage and pork had been brought over by Woo-sung a few days before. The cabbage and pork had been given to him by the *Real Sharing Organization*[101], and, being appreciative of the pair who had made the delivery, he had given a box of deluxe chocolates in return. The pork and cabbage dish was in good company, nudged to the edge of the small table by the seasoned North Korean style potatoes and a plate stacked with fried eggs. Once again Hye-jin announced to her mother "This isn't delicious, I don't like it", I couldn't help but scold her, asking if it was ok for kids to tell their mothers that their cooking didn't taste good, she told me it wasn't and it was just her (Field notes. April 18th 2011).

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[97] Although beyond the scope of this thesis, it seems reasonable to assume that as a talbukin became more settled in South Korea, the number of borrowed/temporary goods in their home would become less, while the number of purchased goods would increase thus marking a change from a state of being 'in-between' (transition), to a state of having 'become' (incorporation).

[98] For an interesting discussion of the 'spirit' of gifts, see Mauss' explication of Maori gift giving in New Zealand (1990[1950]: 10-11).

[99] 김치.

[100] 삼겹살. Thinly sliced pieces of pork made to be barbequed and eaten with a variety of side dishes.

[101] 참 나눔 단체 (http://www.ehelpok.com/main).

Woo-sung received cabbage and pork from an organization that offers extra support to talbukin living alone in South Korea. In return for the cabbage and pork, Woo-sung gave a box of chocolates. The cabbage and pork was then taken to the home of the neighbours where it was given back shortly after, presented to Woo-sung in a cooked form. This did not end the cycle of exchange however, as a few days after this meal eggs and rice cake were given to Woo-sung from the Catholic Church. As with the cabbage and pork, this was also given to Hye-jin's family, where it was cooked and shared amongst everyone. The movement of food is significant in that the back and forth of food represents small symbols of exchange which, in the words of David Sutton, "Serve as a generalised reminder of a community life in which the roads of obligation are constantly open" (Sutton: 2001: 160).

In a similar vein, the movement of goods and the continuous creation and repayment of debts among members of the talbukin community facilitated the development of a mutual trust and a heavy weight of debt between participants. This weight represents obligations to others and cannot be treated frivolously. Feelings of mutual trust underpin the process of incorporation required for developing strong ties between people. This kind of mutual support, built up through the exchange of food, household objects and minor pecuniary transactions, is more than simply a response to limited and unstable labour market opportunities and a way of helping talbukin "survive and to overcome vacillations in their means of livelihood" (Kibria 1993: 86). These interactions are an essential part of pseudo kinship making, contributing to binding participants tightly together over time.

Exchange among talbukin who are building community also includes an emotional element. What Michael Bollig refers to as a 'moral economy' (in Schweizer and White. 1998: 139). Within this moral economy multiple actors are involved in exchange that guarantees mutual support. It is important to keep in mind the 'humanistic' elements of exchange. Exchange facilitates social solidarity, but its role in identity construction must also be kept in mind. The gift binds people together; the nature of each gift reflects the needs and desires of the givers and recipients of the group and contributes towards the progressive construction of the character of the group itself.

3.2. (4) Photographs.

Further to the centrality of eating together, visiting and cycles of debt to the manufacturing of kinship, the taking of the photograph in each of the sites discussed is also of consequence. The taking of the photograph is significant in its contribution towards the creation and maintenance of a group. It is an act referred to by Connerton as an 'Inscribing practice', requiring that a person acts to deliberately trap and hold desired information (Connerton 1989: 73).[102] In this case, information related to the creation of a unified group of people. For each person involved, and for others who see the visual representation, this photo will, in the future, act as a bridge between the present and the past, between the individual viewer and the group in the photo.

This is particularly true in the case of people who lack community of their own. During a church outing with members of Heaven church, it was decided a good idea to take several photos posing in front of the iconic Seoul Tower. The group assembled in preparation for the first photos; I was recruited as the photographer. One new comer to the group, however, was obviously feeling uncertain about this situation and stood apart from the organized group. She was out of the frame of the picture, she was an individual. Members of the group noticed her separation, "Hye-jin, what are you doing, come here with us!" They exclaimed, and pulled her into the fray. She smiled and flashed up a V-sign for the camera. Several photos were taken, all the individuals were captured, but no longer as individuals, they were within the borders of the picture, and they were captured as one mass of people– it was a group (Field notes. 24th April 2011).

[102] Connerton developed many of his ideas from Maurice Halbwachs' thesis *On collective memory*. Halbwachs saw photography as a kind of 'autobiographical memory', used to keep alive memories of specific moments in time. Memory and the remembering process will be discussed in the next chapter of this paper.

Several photos were taken, capturing the newly formed group:

"We sign this, and we will become like family, church family." Talbukin and first time attendee at a Seoul-located church, Ji-ryang Shin told me, indicating to the form marked, 'New Family'.[103] Once we had filled out the forms we introduced ourselves to our 'new family' and were ushered over to the other end of the room where the pastor requested, "I would like to have a photograph with the new members of our family." Each member of the group shuffled closer and closer together, following the directions of the photographer. Several photographs were taken with the pastor of the church at the centre of the group, flanked by six new talbukin church members. "Ok, that's it for today," the pastor exclaimed, "Now please take some time to get to know each other and you must come again next week!" Everyone bowed deeply and promised to return. It was not until we were outside that Ji-ryang muttered, "I don't think I'll go back there, it wasn't very interesting and they ask too many questions" (Field notes. 8th May 2011).

The above episode is interesting for the central role photographing plays, but just as much for Ji-ryang's reaction once outside the church. Ji-ryang's statement highlights the agency involved in negotiating impositions framed using the family idiom. It would be a mistake to think that the process of making pseudo kin is a smooth one. Instead, it should be seen as a process of negotiation as talbukin pick and choose which groups they will be part of based on several factors; these include potential financial rewards, the perceived usefulness of the group in improving one's social standing, whether there are already familiar faces within the group and the material benefits of being part of a group. This episode hints at

[103] 새 가족

the different layers of the family idiom and demonstrates the agency of talbukin as Ji-ryang decided against joining that group simply because it was not interesting enough for her. It is important to keep in mind that at each moment individuals are choosing whether or not to participate in groups and whether or not to invest time in creating and maintaining relationships. The pseudo kinship relations that exist have not come into existence by chance, rather through a protracted weighing of the pros and cons of such relations by individuals such as Ji-ryang.

Despite Ji-ryang's change of heart in regards to becoming a member of that particular family, the power of the photograph to contribute towards 'community making' requires consideration. The photograph, as Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins points out, is not an objective documentation of reality (Lutz and Collins 1993), rather, the photo reflects the worldview of the creator, and in the case of photographs taken in spaces where talbukin build community, the ideal image is that of a unified unit of people.

Natzmer explains how "Photographs can serve as powerful tools to communicate a particular point of view, create a mood or shape an opinion" (in Climo and Cattell 2002: 167). At each site, secular or spiritual, several 'souvenir photos'[104] are taken, all the individuals are captured within the borders of the digital image– but not as individuals– they are a mass. These photos now represent the formation of a bounded group where individuals once existed. The dissemination of this digital representation of a group, along with contact details and advice imparted during the time together, facilitates the formation of a bond between persons and offers palpable evidence of belonging which can be referred back to via 'online café sites'. The photo is significant as evidence of community. The photo acts as a portal between the present and the past, between the individual and the group in the photo.

This chapter has discussed how talbukin manufacture kinship. Offering detailed examples from several sites, specific elements of the community building process have been highlighted as components of the manufacturing of pseudo kinship networks for talbukin living in South Korea. The next chapter will consider the project of remembering and particular mnemonic devices contributing towards solidarity in the present and a bridge to the past.

[104] 기념사진.

Chapter Four: Constructing memory, re-membering and forgetting

> I miss my family on special occasions like Christmas, Seolnal and Chusok.[105] At these times of year everyone is with their families, or having fun with their friends. But I have nowhere to go. This is the time when I feel most lonely. In my house I don't have any pictures of my family, not because I don't want them there, but because they make me sad when I see them (Interview with Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).

This chapter examines what it means for talbukin to be without material reminders of a time prior to leaving North Korea, and how, in lieu of tangible reminders of home, people from North Korea create new memories of the past. These memories produce and reproduce the character of a pseudo family; they are created in a group setting, with other members of the talbukin community, in a process of communal remembering akin to that which Connerton and Halbwachs discuss. This section will also briefly discuss the kinds of mnemonic devices that act as aids to the remembering process, connecting people to a past which is continuously reconstructed through remembering. Carsten writes, "Cumulatively over time, small every day processes of relatedness- such as narrating stories of past…creating or storing material objects– have a larger scale political import" (Carsten 2007: 4). In this respect, it is important to consider that remembering and the memories created during the remembering process are also facilitating solidarity in the present that contributes towards the creation of strong pseudo kinship networks.

The significance of sharing a meal in regards to bringing people together and expediting the manufacturing of ties has already been discussed in the previous chapter. In this section, food itself as a trigger for memory and a point of communion will be considered. Furthermore, the spotlight will also be turned on songs and storytelling as concepts expedient to the socializing process. Through sharing secrets, whether the words to a North Korean song or stories of days spent in one's home village, talbukin embark in a process of remaking the past that in turn informs the present.

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[105] (설날) Seolnal: Lunar new year. (추석) Chusok: Harvest festival.

4.1 No pictures hanging on the wall

> "I think most people don't have anything from their lives before coming to South Korea. Because if they get caught at the border carrying photos or identification it would be a big problem and they would be in trouble for sure. If they are empty handed they can say that they are just going to make some quick money and then come back" (Field notes. Discussion with Ji-ryang: arrived South Korea 2008).

> In Mongolia, relations between living kin, who are absent from each other for parts of the year, are maintained through practices that involve attending to certain objects in the house. These include photographic montages …and embroideries that lace the inside walls of people's homes … (Rebecca Empson, in Carsten 2007: 58).

Carsten et al. (2007) stress the importance of material sites of memory to retaining contact with the missing, the absent and to lands to where return is no longer possible. Through particular mnemonic devices it is possible for those left behind, and those separated to maintain a continuity of narrative, ensuring an identity for the individual and the group is maintained, and a continuity of kinship is preserved. Rebecca Empson points to the photographic montages in the homes of Mongolians who are separated from absent kin explaining, "When separated in life, people are able to maintain relations with each other by distributing themselves through things that are carefully contained inside the household. [Material objects] could be said to act as "biographical objects"" (ibid: 76). These objects– photographic images, artworks and such, act to maintain a connection with absent family and claim authority over their own past, "act[ing] as sites that maintain aspects of people's relations in their absence" (ibid. 61). Carsten adds to this understanding, underlining the importance of the home as a repository of memories, objects within the home materializing a chain of connection to those not physically present (ibid. 93).

It was while visiting a talbukin family during Chusok[106] 2010, that I first noticed the interior of a home well equipped with the latest electronics but lacking either family photos or any features that could speak of life before South Korea. Several more visits to the homes of other talbukin friends confirmed that what distinguished the interior of these homes from the homes of South Koreans was the lack of material sites of memory– photographs, certificates, wall tapestries– offering palpable evidence of continuity to the past. As Ji-ryang explained above, the danger for those attempting to leave North Korea of carrying photographs or even letters from home hinting at their intentions could lead to severe

[106]추석 Harvest festival.

punishment.[107] Some talbukin with whom I spoke had organized to have some photos sent to them via brokers in China. On one occasion, while visiting Jin-hee in her home, she interrupted our conversation to pull out several photos from a drawer. With a wide smile on her face she pointed to each person in the photo, "This is my mum, that's my dad, those are my cousins and that is my sister." She told me. "I saved up my money each month until I could afford to pay a broker to bring these photos from North Korea. Now I can see my family every day" She exclaimed excitedly. When quizzed on how this could be possible, Jin-hee clarified the process;

> First we find out from friends which brokers we can trust, and then we organize to wire money into the account of the broker who is in China. The broker, who is either Chinese or Korean-Chinese, will organize to have our family contacted and the requested objects couriered across the border into China. From China, the objects would be sent to whoever asked for it in South Korea. The problem is that it is expensive to do this and there are no guarantees it will be successful[108] (Interview with Jin-hee: arrived South Korea 2009).

It was not surprising then, that in the homes of talbukin I visited, in stark contrast to the walls of the homes of Mongolian families discussed by Empson, absent were material representations of a past prior to leaving North Korea. The few pictures, placed conspicuously next to the flat screen TV, or hung from the walls of the apartment, were taken *after* defection from North Korea and *following* arrival in South Korea.[109] If 'Home is where the heart is', as the expression goes, and material objects are indeed manifestations, as Carsten and Empson suggest, of a specific personal and group biography, then objects displayed in the homes of talbukin represent a biography that begins with settlement in the South and underlines a discordance of the past with the present.[110]

Yet, despite the difficulty that talbukin have in writing a narrative bridging the present and the past, a lack of material objects representing a life prior to defection does not mean that these are people without a history. Instead, it is required that

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[107] According to reports, conditions continue to worsen in the North Korea/China border region, with an apparent 'crackdown' being called for by Kim Jong-Un, the son of Kim Jong-Il. (*AFP* online report January 10th 2011. http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j0eGVVVMJNtWx3IxbAMf_N2cUq3A?docId=CNG.a04563e50d3f1a734525adeeae758a51.1a1).

[108] I learned from talbukin friends that a rating system, similar to that used by large commercial sites such as *Amazon,* is used to assess the trustworthiness of brokers operating in China. Some brokers are known to be trustworthy and to fulfil their end of the bargain each time, while others are not to be trusted. Obviously, it is in the interest of the brokers to complete their contracts so as to build their business.

[109] Here I distinguish between the time before leaving and the time prior to arrival because, as mentioned in chapter one, many talbukin spend anywhere between a few months and a few years or more in a third country.

[110] I am curious as to what the significance of repopulating the present with physical remains of the past could be to someone who is unable to physically contact relatives in the North, yet is certain of their continued existence.

we look at the alternative means by which talbukin, many of whom arrive in their new homes alone, build a present and manifest continuity with the past. *Mnemonic devices* represent an important means of creating solidarity between individual talbukin in the present and ensuring an ongoing connection to the past.

> When I eat delicious food, I think of my home town. When I wear pretty clothes, I think of my home town friends. When I eat delicious meat, memories of North Korea come flooding back. When I was given a birthday cake, the face of the nun looked like my mother's face (Interview with Jin-hee: arrived South Korea 2009).

As Jin-hee expresses, there are a number of triggers that can facilitate a remembering process for people unable to return to their homes. Food, clothes, or the face of someone close to you can all stand as mnemonic devices enabling a connection from the present to the past. Climo and Cattell (2002) ask, "Where are memories kept?" "Humans", they muse, "Are cultural beings…and memories are everywhere. Memories reside in many mnemonic sites and practices– in language, songs…places and things. Memories are associated with many different inanimate objects…" (Climo and Cattel 2002: 17). For talbukin such as Jin-hee, the return home is not possible and the communal remembering process marks the beginning and/or continuation of the creation of a new community. This section, therefore, will focus firmly on the significance of communal remembering and the role of food, stories and songs in creating a feeling of solidarity between people and in turn contributing towards the development of durable social ties.

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> We [talbukin who have graduated from Hanawon] have now become South Korean citizens, but our roots remain in the North. Even if talbukin forget about North Korea, a longing for their hometown will always remain in their hearts (Interview with Hyun-seok Oh: arrived South Korea 2010).

Talbukin are marked by a lack of what Halbwachs (1992) refers to as 'historical memories', that is, "[Memories] reaching a social actor through written records and other types of records such as photography" (Halbwachs (1950)1992: 24). They are without the material necessities to engage in a process of self referencing made possible by photographs and other tangible records. Instead, people from North Korea draw on a wealth of 'autobiographical memories', events personally experienced, in order to facilitate a sociality in the present. The North Korean refugee community is comprised of people in possession of a South Korean politico-jural identity, as received from the state. These same individuals, however, are people whose roots remain in the North, whose thoughts are with their family and friends above the 38th parallel and for whom, as Hyun-seok

expressed in the above extract, "A longing for their hometown will always remain in their hearts."

Re-membering, for talbukin, means engaging in a process of communal recollection. Narae Park, a talbukin and one of the leaders of YHW group explained, "My closest friends are talbukin. The people who understand my world are the people who have experienced the same world…They understand what I'm talking about and we have really similar feelings" (Interview with Narae Park: arrived South Korea 2008). For individuals such as Narae, these groups offer the opportunity to develop closer ties with others from the North and, when she feels comfortable, with South Koreans also. Through this process it is possible to re-create and to re-member a North Korean community in their new environment. This new North Korean community is similar to that which was left behind, shared with others are the same or similar foods that were eaten in the North, the same stories that were told and songs that were sung. This re-membering process, however, marks the talbukin community as distinct from the wider society, with its own cultural logic and history. Continually sharing food and memories from a time prior to defection brings the contributors closer together until it is possible to describe the participants as a separate group or a community within a community. It creates boundaries between itself and the South Korean society. Pertinent to the creation of a talbukin community, one that encompasses widespread and entrenched social networks, are mnemonic devices for the remembering process.

4.2 Food, storytelling and songs

> Synesthesia provides that experience of 'returning to the whole'…and helps us to understand the significance of food in the maintenance of the identity of…migrants who have left their "homeland" behind (Sutton 2001: 17).
>
> Food, being material, feeds the material body, but sounds, being nonmaterial, feed the nonmaterial spirit. Sounds can feed the soul, because they can be used to express spiritual concepts through a variety of linguistic modes (Climo and Cattell 2002: 100).

The memory power of food, according to Sutton, derives from *synesthesia*, the idea that sensory aspects– sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing enable a remembering process that creates and recreates ties of community. Synesthesia brings a community, in particular a migrant community, closer to the 'whole' that was left behind in the homeland. For those who are unable to return to a time and place in which they are most comfortable, certain sensory aspects, sounds, tastes and smells in particular, are evocative of hometowns and family left behind.

Food, stories and song, feeding both the body and the soul are, in other words, highly significant in the maintenance of identity (ibid. 17).

"South Korean food is too sweet." "South Korean food doesn't taste good." "These noodles are similar to the ones in Pyongyang, but not as good." Light hearted complaints were often heard when eating with talbukin. These statements were not so much statements of distaste regarding the food, rather statements underlining the difference felt between themselves and their new home.

Jin-woo Shin recounted, "I remember how in my neighbourhood [in North Korea] we were able to get food on credit, so I always ate a lot. I used to get pork on credit and boil it before eating. Here in South Korea it's not possible to do that" (Interview with Jin-woo Shin: arrived South Korea 2004). Jin-woo's memories of eating in North Korea are intricately bound up in a narrative of trust and intimacy with the people of the neighbourhood in which he lived in North Korea. For Jin-woo the inability to buy food on credit in South Korea represents a failure to achieve such close ties with others as existed in his hometown. Many talbukin bemoan the lack of jeong in South Korean society; "South Korean people don't have jeong." "People don't care about each other here, they only think about money." These statements underline the disappointment as experienced by Jin-woo. As discussed in chapter three, jeong is a key concept for talbukin who are investing time, money and effort into creating strong, long lasting relationships with others. The jeong that exists between talbukin who have met each other through group meetings is held as setting their relationships apart from the supposed normal, money focused relationships of South Koreans.

"I've got used to it now, but when I first came here I didn't like it." In a similar vein, developing a taste for South Korean food, food which in the words of one young man from North Korea, "Is actually very similar to food in North Korea" (Interview with Seung-soo: arrived South Korea 2010), can be seen as an indication of adaptation to South Korean society. Most talbukin reported that initially they did not enjoy South Korean food; "When I first arrived in South Korea, the food was too sweet and oily for me, but I got used to it", confirmed Woo-sung (Interview with Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004). For the most part, it seems, talbukin who enjoyed South Korean food were often those who had lived in the South for a longer period of time.

Food, as a mnemonic device, would consistently be both the subject of discussion and the trigger for recalling times before South Korea. Remembering would be

done over bowls of cold noodles, steaming plates of moist sundae,[111] or dishes of potato and cabbage.

It is a natural process; first the smell of the food would fill the noses of those joined together to share the meal, whether in a church setting, an NGO meeting or simply with other talbukin friends. As explained in the third chapter, the table would be prepared according to Korean fashion, with rice usually appearing as the staple of each meal. "Jalmeogetseumnida"[112] would be called out by each person at the table and then the air would be filled with the clinking of steel chopsticks and the sounds of eating. Inevitably, the taste of the food, intermingling with the smells would prompt someone to cry out, "Mashittah!"[113] As the first mouthfuls were swallowed down, conversation would tentatively begin, usually initiated by the oldest person at the table;

> "This pork is pretty good yeah? I remember when I was doing my military service, we were so hungry and there was no food to eat so sometimes we would go and steal food from the farms [in North Korea]. Quite often the farmers would go and check on their pigs in the morning and find the bodies of soldiers who had been too weak to carry the pig away and been killed in the process. You know military service is ten years in North Korea?"
>
> "Really? Ten years? That's a lot longer than in South Korea."
>
> "Yes, it's much harder than in South Korea. The men go away young and come back middle aged. It's a hard life; they can't date or even have a vacation during that time. But some men like it; at least in the military they can get food and sometimes they can take food to their families" (Field notes. January 2011).

The narrative above took place following the monthly meeting of an organization that works with North Korean refugees. The leader of the group, not known for opening up on personal matters, was prompted to speak about memories from his time in the North Korean military. His recollections encouraged questions from other participants in the meal, both North Korean and South Korean, and from that point on, the conversation took on a life of its own.

One story would lead to another, with participants trading their memories, building a communal narrative that had a dual effect. Firstly, offering a window to the past, to a time prior to arriving in South Korea and before leaving North Korea.

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[111] 순대 a Korean dish made generally by boiling or steaming cow or pig's intestines that are stuffed with various ingredients. It is a kind of blood sausage. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sundae_(Korean_food))

[112] 잘 먹겠습니다. Thank you for the food.

[113]맛있다. It tastes great.

Secondly giving the impression of sharing secrets, expressing parts of oneself that, without the present company and without the food which each person continued to consume, might otherwise remain dormant. This represents a time when a communal remembering occurs, speech is delivered in a linguistic code familiar to other talbukin, jokes are told that would make little sense to South Koreans and foreigners alike, and places are referred to that have no meaning to those not acquainted with the towns and provinces of North Korea. As the meal changed rhythm, so would the conversation ebb and flow. Evoked by diverse foods, memories are shared in different ways each time with new stories forming part of the ongoing narrative being written by, and on the talbukin community.

The food in South Korea is similar to that served in the North and eating customs are also very similar. While sharing a meal with others from North of the border, the accents of those gathered around the table becomes more marked as they shake off the months spent practicing the Seoul 'standard dialect'[114] and revert back to the language of their home province. As the meal wears on, familiarity with the food and a mutual acceptance of their differences with the wider South Korean community ensures conversation will inevitably lead back to stories related to food, and discussion about food will in turn ignite more stories of home. Sutton, this time drawing on the work of John Forrest (1988) explains, "A sensual link is created between all those present at the meal and between all those who took part in similar meals in earlier years" (Sutton: 109). The food creates a link both to the past and to memories of moments in North Korea, and facilitates the creation of an imagined community consisting of other participants at the table. This is especially true when eating North Korean food, during which time, the cooking and the eating process for talbukin becomes an attempt to recreate elements of a home to which return is not possible. Just as those sharing in the remembering process are recreating the past, the past is also acting to inform the present. The food prompts the recollecting and remaking of memories; these memories have the effect of contributing to the character of the group. For talbukin who come together regularly to share in meals, the food is a medium through which connections are externalized and families, identities and solidarity are confirmed.

Storytelling, intimately entangled with the consumption of food, is a device pertinent to the community building process. Through the medium of the story, links are created between the listener and the teller, between past selves and present selves (Climo and Cattell: 84). In discussion of kinship memories of

[114] 서울 표준말 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seoul_dialect)

movement and accompanying narratives that act to maintain a connection to place and time in the Polish Highlands, Frances Pine notes that,

> In the telling of...memories of hunger and poverty, and memories of migration...or the recounting of the memories, I would argue that they [Polish villagers] were making and reinforcing kinship, both their own place within a kindred, and the ties of emotion and interest that linked them to some families and kept them separate from others (Carsten 2007: 110).

This is also the case among talbukin, where the narrating of stories is a considerable part of the process of establishing trust and friendship between individuals, of sharing knowledge and initiating relationships built on reciprocity. The past is recreated for oneself and for others, and is reconstituted in the desired form by the storyteller. Remembering, the act of looking back in time and locating particular episodes which are then brought forth and verbalised or translated through bodily performance, is a communal activity. Furthermore, remembering takes a different form each time it is done, with memories taking a slightly different shape according to the situation in which they are remembered, the person who remembers them and the stimuli that prompts such a memory to be called forth. Certain fragments are omitted or deliberately forgotten while embellishments are added in accordingly, for entertainment's sake. Sometimes the memories of others are adopted as our own. There is no definite, objective truth during the communal memory making process.

> When my friends and I got really hungry, we would head into the corn fields. They were guarded by men with guns, who would fire warning shots at first and then shoot at you. But we would usually be successful, taking our corn to the river to cook and eat (Discussion with Chang-gyu: arrived South Korea 2002).

Memories of food, memories of friends and memories of hunger constitute common themes of discussion when talbukin come together. Stories shared of times prior to leaving North Korea, however, often have an innocent quality to them[115]; a time before the stresses of living in South Korea, of worrying about saving money from a part-time job or graduating and starting a career. Many other stories are tinged with remorse at the past;

> Children [in my hometown in North Korea] went to school in the morning and helped farmers in the afternoon. We did not know why we had to hold hoes and pickaxes instead of going to school. So nobody had complaints or dissatisfaction with their lives. That is mainly because our lives were like they had always been. All the time, we idolised Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong

[115] For an interesting account of everyday life prior to leaving North Korea, Barbara Demick's *Nothing to Envy: Real lives of North Koreans* is particularly useful.

Il and sang a song about how we were the happiest children in the world…Due to food rationing, students had to eat rice porridge all the time. In winter, we heated classrooms by making a fire in the stove. It was always a long winter (Woo-sung blog for British Embassy).

The stories themselves are mnemonic devices, causing listener and speaker to cast their minds back together. The stories are inextricably bound up with the consumption of food. In the words of Climo, "Such re-membering tends to blur surface distinctions between family and community, self and collective, past and present, and space and time. It also provides immigrants with important community networks in the adopted country…" (ibid: 122). The effect of storytelling and song is closely related.

North Korean songs are not often heard in South Korea. They are too easily mistaken as political acts of protest against the Southern state or worse, support for the North. When among other talbukin, however, singing a song from home is not so much a political act, rather an expression of longing for people, places and a time that cannot be brought back. For people who have experienced loss and for those who find themselves alone in their new environment singing songs that bring to mind a time before coming to South Korea offers a means to expedite the creation of feelings of solidarity.

Mother's Song. (As dictated by Jin-hee: arrived in South Korea 2008)[116]

엄마의 노래	Mother's Song
오늘은 왜 이다지 오늘은 왜 이다지 작은 이 가슴 아플까?	Why oh why does my heart yearn today?
떠나야만 하는 길 떠나야만 하는 길 그 사랑이 발목을 잡네.	Down the road I'm leaving, down the road I'm leaving. Yet I'm held back, it's so hard to leave.
멀리 어딘가 그 어데 갔어도 엄마사랑 잊지 못해요	No matter where I go, or how far I travel, I can never forget mother's love.
비가 오나 눈이 오나 엄마사랑 잊지 못해요	Come rain or snow, I can never forget mother's love.
바람이 불면은 찬바람 맞을까 걱정의 밤 지새우고	When it blows hard and cold she stays awake with worry.
손에 물집 생기면 이 손잡고 우시던 그 사랑이 더욱 뜨겁네.	When my hands blister, she takes my hands and weeps, this ever-warming love.

Jin-hee described the song above as her favourite song, a song expressing that, "Wherever I go in this world, you will always be my mother, the one who gave birth to me and the person who gave me tender love that I can never forget." "For me," explained Jin-hee, "This song is a song of earnest love and longing."[117] Songs such as this one were sung by Jin-hee with her talbukin friends and the nuns of the group home on bus trips and whenever they wanted to cheer themselves up. It would lift their spirits and bring back memories of hometowns, mothers and fathers.

Climo and Cattell write, "Songs…are sung and experienced in communal settings and thus become bridges between the individual and the collective, the past and the present" (Climo and Cattell: 36). In the case of people from North Korea, it is through gathering together for food, storytelling and song that people remember their past and are able to negotiate their present and their identity within the wider community. The narrative of a remembered story is part of a larger narrative of group identity. It is a multi-vocal narrative, mutable and open to constant revision by members of the group. In the case of North Korean refugees in South Korea, the communal narrative is a code of distinct and exclusive identity, demarcating the boundaries between themselves and South Korean society.

4.3 Forgetting

Many talbukin, who had been in South Korea for a few years or more, had some difficulty in remembering their favourite North Korean food and the consensus was, whereas initially they merely ate South Korean food because it was the most readily available fare, they now claimed to enjoy South Korean food and eat it regularly. "I miss my mother's cooking but, to be honest, I can't remember how a lot of food in North Korea tastes. It's not so different to South Korean food", explained Seung-soo Kim (Interview with Seung-soo Kim).

Elaborating on this idea, it is also interesting to look at how the project of forgetting goes beyond a changing palate and constitutes an integral part of the adaptation process for talbukin. The project of forgetting is marked on the bodies of many talbukin. After inquiring as to the whereabouts of one female talbukin friend whom I had not seen in a while, Woo-sung explained in a matter of

[117]"이 노래는 엄마에 대한 노래인데요 세상 그어디에 간다고 해도 자기를 낳아준 부모의 따뜻한 사랑을 잊지못한다는 그리움의 절절한 노래이구요"

fact manner, “Oh she has gone for plastic surgery. Her mother got eye surgery and she thought it looked good so she got a loan for a full face lift. She is in hospital now so maybe we can see her in a few weeks.” His reaction after meeting her three weeks later was impressive; “She is a new person, beautiful, I didn’t even recognize her!” In regards to the lengths that individuals will go to try and ‘become South Korean’, it is interesting to note the numbers of talbukin choosing to have cosmetic surgery. During my field work I knew of three women who had various kinds of facial cosmetic surgery. This could be viewed as a physical expression of change in one’s life and of becoming what is considered modern and South Korean. It could also be viewed as expressing a desire for a complete break with the past, becoming a new person and embarking upon the most dramatic quest to forget and begin anew.

Adopting new names was another means of forgetting aspects of the past. Ji-ryang explained,

> When I was in North Korea I had one name, and then when I moved to China I used another. Then when I moved to a different city in China I changed again. When I arrived in South Korea I changed my name one more time. Every time I move I change my name, I don’t want people to know my past (Interview with Ji-ryang: arrived South Korea 2008).

Indeed, a majority of talbukin interviewed confirmed they had changed their names at some point in the past since leaving North Korea. At the beginning of a YHW meeting, one new arrival to South Korea stood up and announced, “My name is no longer Soo-yong, it is now Yong-jin.” When asked why he had changed his name he explained, “I worry about my family in North Korea so changing my name will make it harder for people to know who I am and who my family is.” Soo-min clarifies this issue,

> Talbukin hesitate to share stories about their past in North Korea, it can sometimes be uncomfortable. This is because in North Korea there are a lot of spies, so it is common that [when you come to South Korea] you leave your name and many of your stories behind so as not to endanger your family (Interview with Soo-min: arrived South Korea 2003).

Adapting to the South Korean diet, changing one’s physical features through surgery and changing names are representative of a process of forgetting, a process intimately tied into the projects of memory and identity. Remembering intersects with forgetting at the place where a newly imagined North Korea begins. This revised North Korea, constructed from communally remembered and forgotten episodes of the past is now less a land of tragedy than it is a mythic,

idealized past. For many, this mythic past continues to exercise a strong pull, back to a time of simplicity and purity.

As North Korean refugees move further from the past, they are caught up in a political rhetoric that demands they deny the differences that exist between themselves and their host society and become South Korean. Unfortunately, what is expected from talbukin in terms of becoming South Korean, is often at odds with what is possible, Soo-min explains, "We [talbukin] are expected to become just like South Koreans according to the government's assimilation policies.[118] This means giving up who I am and I don't want to do that" (Interview with Soo-min: arrived South Korea 2003). Adaptation to South Korean society and a manifestation of the becoming process can be seen through the acclimatization of talbukin to the South Korean diet and the process of forgetting. Having said this, remembering is a powerful, ongoing process occurring whenever talbukin come together to share in food, alcohol, story and song. Given the significance of remembering to the process of creating and maintaining ties between people from North Korea, it seems unlikely that most North Korean refugees would ever fully assimilate to South Korean society.

This section has underlined the unique nature of a new community in South Korea. Talbukin are continuously creating continuities of memory and building pseudo kinship ties. Crucial to this process are elements of memory and kinship– photographs, food, stories and songs. These are concepts with a dual purpose, to underline a fragile and ambiguous connection to the past, while facilitating the creation and maintenance of a new, forward looking community. Memory– the intricacies of remembering and forgetting– is the foundation of the talbukin self and the developing talbukin society. Talbukin are always steeped in memory and without memories of a time prior to South Korea, there could be no self and no identity for the talbukin community. Without memory, talbukin could not distinguish themselves from the wider South Korean society.

[118] South Korean society purports a discourse of assimilation with regards to arrivals from North Korea, this is based on the often repeated axiom that North and South Koreans are of the same blood (정주신 2009). It is expected that talbukin would, therefore, naturally 'become' South Korean and shed all features marking them as different.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

> I was born in 1988, in a small town near the North Korean border. When I was a teenager, our father contracted typhoid. Shortly after, both my brother and I also fell sick. We didn't have enough medicine to treat the sickness, so our mother would travel on foot to the border between China and North Korea to sell and trade rice wine, the profits of which she then used to procure the required medicine. My brother and I recovered, but despite the best efforts of our mother, our father died. Our mother realised that life would be extremely difficult, so she made the decision to leave North Korea and travel across the border into China where she would seek help to bring my brother and I across. Upon receiving word that our mother had arrived safely and was lying low in the home of some Korean-Chinese friends, my older brother and I decided the time was ripe for our own departure. Setting out at night, we traversed the check points and watch towers that lined the border area close to our home and, crossing the shallow waters of the Tuman River, we sneaked into China. We then split up and made for separate safe houses arranged by our mother.
>
> For several months I lived with an elderly Korean-Chinese woman, exchanging physical labour around her home for room and board. Days were spent chopping wood and washing pots. For safety reasons, I could not contact my brother or mother and as such had to rely on an aunt, who had also defected, for family related information and the occasional treat. At that time I was quite young and had never tasted sweets before. My aunt would come and keep me company, each time bringing with her a 5 kilogram bag of sweets. I would spend the rest of the week eating these treats.
>
> This was never supposed to be a permanent situation for our family. Life was stressful and because of the ever present danger of capture, there was no chance for me to do anything but work. The hardest thing was the threat of being captured by the police; because of this stress, I could never sleep well at night. I was also very lonely, being apart from my family.
>
> When the time came, our mother and my older brother and I organised ourselves to leave for South Korea. Employing a broker as a guide, we made our way through Southeast Asia, and turned ourselves in to a member of the local police force who in turn passed us on to South Korean embassy members. Months later we were in Hanawon, in South Korea (Interview with Chang-gyu Kim: arrived in South Korea 2002).

Chang-gyu Kim is now a student at one of South Korea's more prestigious universities. Through the pecuniary shrewdness of his mother and relatives that came after, more family members– aunts, uncles and cousins– have been bought out of North Korea, to the point where Chang-gyu can now count the number of family members in South Korea on both hands. Chang-gyu has a strong family network and many friends. He works while studying and is planning overseas travel. He explains that on the whole he enjoys his life in South Korea, musing that, "There are good points and bad points; my family helps me a lot" (Interview

with Chang-gyu Kim).

Chang-gyu is like many of the young talbukin that have made their way from North Korea, through China and into South Korea in the last ten years. What marks Chang-gyu's case as unique among the many North Korean refugees discussed in this thesis is that he was able to come to South Korea with multiple family members, among them his mother and older brother. Saving and pooling their settlement money after arrival and supplementing this with money earned from work, they were able to bring the remaining family members south, effectively transplanting their kin networks through a financially driven process of chain migration.

The point of the vignette above, if we are to contrast it with the opening story of Jin-hee, is that although both of these young people have experienced great hardships, Chang-gyu knows that he has family he can rely on for both financial and emotional support. In his case it is relatively simple to argue that, because of his family, he has adapted more quickly and suffered less, psychologically, than North Koreans such as Jin-hee who arrive alone. In Jin-hee's situation, the assistance she receives from church and NGO groups in Seoul, and the support she receives from her talbukin friends contribute to making amends with the troubles of the past.

5.1 The pseudo kinship of talbukin

> Everyone needs love. The love of a lover; the love of your family; the love of siblings. But I have been separated from my family and I can no longer feel their love. Therefore, I regret coming here [South Korea]. No matter how well I live here, I'll always feel that even if I had to live a harder life with my family in North Korea, it would be better[119] (Interview with Narae).

> When I am by myself I get lonely. At night, when I'm alone I think about North Korea, in particular I think about my hometown. I also think about reunification (Interview with Jin-hee).

This thesis has examined features of the North Korean refugee community in South Korea. More specifically, this thesis has put the kinds of networks being created by talbukin under the microscope. I have argued that many of these relationships go beyond mere community and simple friendship and represent

[119] 모든 사람에게는 사랑이 필요하잖아요. 애인과의 사랑, 가족간의 사랑, 형제간의 사랑…그런데 나는 가족들과 헤어져서 가족들의 사랑을 못 느끼잖아요. 그래서 그때 후회해요. 풍요롭게 살지는 못해도 북한에서 가족들과 산다면 얼마나 좋을까 하는 생각을 해요.

more than basic social networks, instead, what is being manufactured, through an investment of time, money and energy, is a form of instrumentally and emotionally significant pseudo kinship relationship.

These relationships differ from normal friendships in the intensity and depth of the relationship; the implications of the relationship as a lifeline to individuals negotiating the socio-political landscape of South Korea; the deeply felt mutual dependence of participants for various kinds of help, and the expectation that relations will remain strong, despite the possibility of infrequent contact. These relationships are constructed over a long period of time, through continuous exchange of material goods, information and emotional support. These relationships are created in unique circumstances– participants being far away from their home, in an alien environment and without the guarantee of a return north.

These connections are embedded in common feelings of loss and uprootedness. For talbukin, loss itself provides historicity, a shared understanding between new arrivals and a conceptual anchor in time. All North Korean refugees living in South Korea share a history of loss. This shared burden provides a starting point for the creation of community between strangers. Fictive kinship ties are created in spaces where time is set aside for free discussion, for the sharing of a meal, the singing of songs and the telling of stories. The feeling of displacement and of longing for those left behind can never be entirely compensated for by a church or NGO group, as is expressed by Narae and Jin-hee above. However, church groups such as Heaven church, and X Church and NGO groups such as PSCORE and YHW in Seoul are essential for creating a sense of community that comes as close to family as possible for individuals who are without.

Within the process of creating pseudo kin, the agency of individual talbukin in picking and choosing which groups to be a part of and where and when to form relationships is equally as important as pronouncing the familial idiom. Verbalization of familial terms, in churches or NGO groups does not automatically mean that people will consider themselves as kin. Individuals continue to exercise their own free will to decide if they will be part of a group and whether or not they will form relationships. Initial motivating factors are often the potential material gains to be had, rather than an acceptance of the proclamation that “We are all kin”. These motivations, however, have the potential to change as initial contacts are made within the group and the beginnings of meaningful relationships offering emotional comfort present themselves.

Smaller study groups and the Manitto Suhaeng are extremely pertinent as positive, relationship building spaces in which talbukin can express themselves without fear of being judged. Within these environments individuals are able to build self-confidence and create relationships that are of particular importance for those without family in South Korea. The groups discussed stand as models of what is required for talbukin to tackle the psychological trauma experienced during and after leaving North Korea and arriving in South Korea. These groups are a key ingredient in the successful settlement of North Koreans in South Korea.

Key to the manufacturing of pseudo kinship networks in the talbukin community are tools of memory. Mnemonic devices such as food, songs and stories are ways of connecting to the past for people that have no physical reminders of life prior to arrival in South Korea. Furthermore, these mnemonic devices facilitate a socializing process among talbukin, thus encouraging feelings of solidarity and community. The talbukin community is distinct in that its solidarity is based on remade memories of the past, triggered by smells and tastes of hometowns and stories that extort a character divergent from the wider community in which they reside. Individuals in this community are further bound by gift giving and pecuniary transactions, ensuring a constant flow of goods that keep members obligated to one other. This pseudo family extends the social reach of the individual who is without consanguine kin, to compensate for unstable community identity and fragmented blood-based kinship in a nation divided.

5.2 Reunification: So close, yet so far

> The reason I stay in South Korea is because I have to get ready for reunification. I have to be prepared to help. I am certain reunification will happen. My elder sister died in North Korea and was buried there. When reunification happens, the first thing I want to do is find her grave and offer her blessings. Actually, there are so many things I want to do. I want to work with North Korean people, teaching them. When reunification happens, I'm going to be so busy (Interview with Hyun-seok Oh: arrived South Korea 2010).

> These days I am feeling a little negative about the chances of reunification. Now that Kim Jong Il is dead the person in charge [Kim Jong-un] is so young and politically inexperienced, things are quite unstable. I thought it would have been different following his death, I thought the US or Japan would take the lead in trying to make things change. But no, nothing has changed. I haven't lost hope though, there is still hope. There has to be, because my family is still there [in North Korea] (Interview with Soo-min Jeong: arrived South Korea 2003).

For the talbukin community, consisting of individuals for whom a unified Korea also means reuniting with family, the idiom of reunification is ever present.

Reunification is a promise for each individual and is discussed as if it could happen tomorrow. Reunification provides the engine for the work of religious groups and secular groups alike. For some church groups it represents the obligation to move north offering salvation to North Koreans. Bo-hyun Pak, who arrived in South Korea in 2009, characterised religion in South Korea using the metaphor of a race;

> As soon as reunification occurs, the Catholics and the Protestants will be racing each other north across the border to proselytize. I was put off by the aggressiveness of the Protestants because they were too strong, they pushed too much. Even though I spent my high school time after I came to South Korea in a Catholic run centre, they never pushed me to believe in God or do anything religious. This is what I liked. So I think the Catholics will be more successful in North Korea (Discussion with Bo-hyun Pak: arrived South Korea 2009).

The possibility for conversion on such a massive scale is something many religious groups feel strongly about. Songs sung during worship are sung with lyrics that cry out for the reuniting of kin and a return to the natural unity of the Korean people. Prayers are offered for reunification and sermons are regularly couched in the language of reunion. Such songs were also sung at the beginning of the YHW group meetings. Lyric sheets would be passed around and a seminary from the Catholic Church would begin strumming the opening bars of a song he was sure "Everyone must know by now."

통일의 노래 (*The Song of Unification)*: Words by Jong-shik Park, Music by Ho-rim Kim:

비가오나 눈이오나 하늘—푸른 그날에나 꿈결에도 부르는 노—래가있다면 통일이여라 아 통이이여라 통일이여라 아 통이이여라 시내물도 흘러 흘러 림진강에 합쳐 지듯 한맘으로 부르는 노래가 있다면 통일이 여라 아 통일이여라 자나깨나 우리 소원 분단의 장벽 허물고 우리 겨레 얼싸 안고 함께 부를 노래는 통일이여라 아 통일이여라 통일이여라 아 통일이여라.	Come rain or snow, the day we are waiting for will bring clear skies. This is a song for those who have a dream. Sing for unification, sing for unification! As the flowing stream flows and mixes with the Rim-jin river. If there is a song to sing with one heart, Sing for unification, sing for unification! Our dream and our obsession, Breaking down the barriers of division. Together, with our fellow countrymen, we shall embrace this song, Sing for unification, sing for unification! Sing for unification, sing for unification!

The *Song of Unification* was used as the opener to each meeting. The lyrics highlight several themes consistent in religious and non-religious groups that work with talbukin; Firstly, unification is something that comes from the heart, it is not a political issue; secondly, it is a state of being that everyone desires, an achievable dream; thirdly, it is a return to a norm, like streams running into a larger river, unification represents a return to the natural order of things. Songs such as *Song of Unification* are a staple part of most meetings and focus the group's attention on the long term project of reunification. The voices in the room would hesitate at first, until each person found the rhythm and confidence, helped, in large, by prompting from the seminary.

Unification is a goal to work towards. The promise of the future offers talbukin and South Korea NGO workers motivation for their work. "South Korea needs to foster talent among defectors who can contribute to a reunified Korea" (*Dong Ah Ilbo* November 16th 2010). This was the argument of an article in the *Dong Ah Ilbo*, a widely circulated South Korean newspaper, which called for more attention to young talbukin already in South Korea. The article, entitled "Vanguards of Reunification", expressed a common feeling among NGOs that work with talbukin. The importance of working with people from North Korea, teaching them skills and developing a sense of understanding between people prepares talbukin to act as a metaphorical bridge between the South and the North. Well educated talbukin will play an intermediary role between North Koreans and South Koreans, having had experience living on both sides of the border. Reunification is always being prepared for, by groups and individuals. The talbukin community is a future-facing community. This community is future-facing in that in each of the sites, the trope of reunification is ever present. The promise of reunification stands as another chapter in a story about belonging and identity that is written into the making of North Korean refugee communities.

5.3 Room for future study: Transnational ties

It became clear as the research for this thesis progressed, that the networks being constructed by talbukin in South Korea were by no means confined within the national boundaries of the South Korean nation-state. In many cases, individuals had family and/or pseudo transnational family ties stretching into China and even as far as the United Kingdom and Canada. Woo-sung confirmed the importance of these transnational networks to his own journey from North Korea:

> I received a lot of help from extended family in China. They gave me a lot of

> information about South Korea and, well, compared to China, South Korea offers a better lifestyle. My family in China lent me money to pay to come to South Korea, when I got settled into South Korea I sent my family [in China] an invite to come to South Korea as well. Because of my invite they were able to get a visa. It was a case of killing two birds with one stone;[120] I could come to South Korea and start a new life and my extended family in China could visit South Korea for whatever reasons they wished (Interview with Woo-sung: arrived South Korea 2004).

Indeed, the instrumental value of these networks was, on several occasions, made salient, with goods being sent back and forth to overseas locations and, when required, forwarded into North Korea to waiting family members.[121] The globalized nature of these connections was highlighted during the inaugural meeting of the *World Federation of North Korean Refugees*[122] in November 2010. During this conference, discussion was held on the developing global networks of North Korean refugees. The key speaker disclosed that there were over 150,000 North Korean refugees all over the world. This conference brought to the attention of many talbukin present the opportunities for networking on a global scale.

In October 2011, I carried out research on one aspect of these globalized connections in Jilin Province, China. Two weeks travelling by ship and train, talking with ethnic Koreans I met in the street, in the cabins of Korean-Chinese ferries and in the dining cars of Chinese passenger trains clarified further the process of defection and an environment that both facilitates and hinders such an illicit movement of people. For the most part, during this time, I stayed with an ethnic Korean family in a town near the border with North Korea. I spent the days moving back and forth from Yanji, the capital of the Korean Autonomous Province, listening to the Korean tongue being spoken in the local dialect and eating Korean food that was so similar, yet always slightly different to that which I enjoyed in Seoul.

In Northeast Asia, there are existing networks of exchange, commerce and information which extend from North Korea, through China and on to South Korea. These networks transcend borders antagonistic to this form of transnational trade, ensuring groups and individuals are tied into relationships of obligation that promote ongoing, mutually beneficial exchanges. The benefits of

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[120] 일거양득.

[121] One interviewee discussed how she had sent South Korean food in a parcel to her family in North Korea. In return her family had sent her a picture of them all together. These transactions are carried out via brokers.

[122] (재) 북한 이탈주민후원회 (사) 북한 전략센터: 세계북한인총연맹 창립식

these networks for those who participate go far beyond the material. Relationships can be activated and utilized for the mutual, pecuniary benefit of individuals, but, more importantly, the networks are an important source of information and identity maintenance for the ethnic Korean community in China and talbukin in South Korea.

Continued exchange between ethnic Koreans in the Autonomous ethnic Korean region of China and people in the two Koreas reaffirms ethnic identity for the minority group and ensures a sense of group solidarity. Claims as to what is and what is not Korean are manifest in the common foods eaten by ethnic Koreans, the common Korean language spoken and a shared tie to the land. Underpinning continuous transnational exchange is the concept of kinship. Ethnically rooted and sustained through both 'real' and fictive familial relationships, kinship networks act as a conduit for a transnationalism that challenges the geo-political claims of the nation state to control its borders and repress ethnic separatism. Further research on the nature of these transnational ties would examine the way in which transnational exchanges are used to maintain a mutable ethnic identity that is made and remade in the face of continued challenges at the geo-political level.

Appendix A:
13th May 2011: The History of Objects in the Household.

Question: Where did the object come from, how long has it been in your possession and what do you think you will do with it next?

1. **The television:** The TV came from my North Korean aunt's house. Because she came to South Korea three years earlier than me. The government was giving a bigger house to her because she had other family members coming to live with her. I've had it for four years, when I get married I'll buy a new one.
2. **HP Printer:** When I came to Seoul, I needed the internet so I joined an internet company, they had a special event and they gave me the printer for free. This also came with some other things. I guess I'll keep it for a while yet.
3. **Glass window display cabinet:** Same as number one. It came from the North Korean aunt.
4. **Large picture of a waterfall scene:** This is from seven years ago when I came to South Korea. Every North Korean defector who comes to South Korea has a police person who takes care of us. My police minder gave me this. He was very kind and gave me some other things as well.
5. **Low chest of drawers:** Same as Number one. From the North Korean aunt.
6. **Hifi Stereo System:** This is from my friend, also from North Korea. He had that player four years ago. He went to Britain and he asked me if I needed something to listen to music with. Maybe I'll keep it for a few years yet.
7. **Kaiser wall clock:** I bought it in a shop seven years ago. I think I'll keep it for another ten years. I like it.
8. **Chargeable vacuum cleaner:** I bought this on the internet about two years ago. I think I'll keep it until it dies.
9. **Low fold away table #1:** This if from my North Korean friend. I've had it for about five years**.**
10. **Low fold away table #2:** This is from my Chinese friend. I've had it for five months.
11. **Low fold away table #3:** This is from seven years ago, I bought it myself. I'll keep all these tables until they die.
12. **Large clothes cupboard:** Same as number four. It came from my Police minder.
13. **Large book shelves:** I bought these myself one year ago. I'll keep them until I move into a bigger house.
14. **Self standing jacket hanger:** I bought this on the internet maybe three years ago, when I started university.
15. **Large lamp:** My friend gave this to me. The same friend who went to the UK.
16. **Large potted plant:** I bought this myself one year ago. I'll keep it until it dies.
17. **Large fridge/freezer:** Same as number one. North Korean aunt.
18. **Water cooler**: I bought this myself four years ago.
19. **Table:** Same as number one**.** North Korean aunt.
20. **Rice cooker:** I bought this myself four years ago; I'll keep it until I get married.
21. **Microwave:** Same as number one. North Korean aunt.

22. **Pots and pans:** Some I bought and some I got from the North Korean and some from the aunt at Catholic Church.

23. **Bed:** From my Chinese friend. I have had it for about 4 months.

24. **Clothes rack:** I bought this two years ago because I was accumulating clothes.

25. **Book shelf:** This is from four years ago; it came from the same North Korean friend who went to the UK. I guess I'll keep it until I move to a new house.

26. **Mirror:** I bought this myself, I've had it three years and I'll keep it for a long time.

27. **Tea set:** Chinese friends gave this to me when I went to China for travel. That was three years ago. They gave me some tea. I'll keep it a long time.

28. **Two dogs ornament**: This is from my North Korean friend. I've had it for one year perhaps?

29. **Washing Machine:** Same as number one. North Korean aunt**.**

30. **Laptop:** I bought it from a person at my university. He gave me discount. They are North Korean friends.

31. **Clothes:** Some clothes are from church and some are gifts from friends.

32. **Books:** Some books are from church and some are from groups. Others I bought, but mostly they are gifts.

33. **Motor bike:** I bought it on the internet. I got it last year (2010).

Appendix B: Information regarding interviewees
Name, gender, date of arrival in South Korea, date interviewed.

Kim Seung-soo, male: arrived South Korea 2010.
Interviewed: 20th December 2011.

Park Jin-hee, female: arrived South Korea 2009.
Interviewed: 20th October 2011.

Lee Woo-sung, male: arrived South Korea 2004.
Interviewed: 7th December 2011.

Oh Hyun-suk, male: arrived South Korea 2010.
Interviewed: 7th November 2011.

Shin Jin-woo, male: arrived South Korea 2005.
Interviewed: 6th October 2011.

Kim Chang-gyu, male: arrived South Korea 2002.
Interviewed: 4th October 2011.

Park Narae, female: arrived South Korea 2008.
Interviewed: 3rd November 2011.

Shin Ji-ryang, female: arrived South Korea 2008.
Interviewed: 5th November 2011.

Jeong Soo-min, female: arrived South Korea 2002.
Interviewed: 22nd February 2012.

Yu Jee-hyun, female: arrived South Korea 2007.
Interviewed: 19th November 2011.

Hong Ju-yeong, female: arrived South Korea 2008.
Interviewed: 14th November 2011.

Wang Ji-eun, female: arrived South Korea 2007.
Interviewed: 14th November 2011.

Kim Jae-hong, male: arrived South Korea 2004.
Interviewed: 7th November 2011.

Lee Sook-in, female: arrived South Korea 2007.
Interviewed: 7th November 2011.

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개요

-결별과 결속: 탈북인들의 친척 '만들기'-

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이 연구는 남한에 가족이 살고 있지 않은 탈북인들이 사회적인 네트워크를 형성하는 방법은 무엇이며, 이를 어떻게 유지하는가에 대해서 살펴 보는 것을 목적으로 하였다. 특히 가족이 부재한 탈북인들을 위해 만들어진 사회적인 네트워크가 유사 친척으로서 기능한다는 것을 보여주고자 하였다. 이를 위하여 "과정으로서의 친척 (processual kinship)" 개념을 사용하여 탈북인들 간의 관계가 서로 교류하는 과정에서 점차 발전되어 가는 모습을 살펴보았다. 탈북인들의 형식적인 만남과 교류는 대부분 교회 모임 및 비정부단체 (Non-governmental Organization)들의 모임을 통해서 이루어지며, 비형식적인 만남은 함께 식사를 하거나 지속적인 방문을 통해 물질적인 도움을 주고 받고, 북한과 관련된 이야기를 나누며 교류하는 방식으로 나타난다. 따라서 탈북인들의 형식적이고 비형식적인 '친척 만들기' (manufacturing kinship) 과정에서 발생하는 도구적, 정서적인 측면를 함께 고려하고자 하였으며, 그 일환으로 '기억'의 중요성 또한 살펴 보았다.

탈북인들이 교회와 비정부 단체에서 만드는 네트워크는 현실적인 이득을 제공할 뿐만 아니라 정서적인 측면에서도 도움을 준다. 이 사회적 공간들에서 탈북인들은 대화와 음식, 기억과 노래를 나누며 서로 친해짐으로써 기능적이며 정서적인 네트워크를 만들고 있다. 이 과정에서 탈북인들은 그들을 초대하는 수많은 단체에 대해 전략적인 선택을 하며, 보조금 등의 경제적인 이득을 최대한으로 상승시키며

커뮤니티 활동에 적극적인 주체로 참여한다. 하지만 이러한 경제적인 측면 외에도 단체들을 통해 알게 되는 다른 탈북인들과 고향에 대해 함께 이야기 하고 기억을 공유하며 고향 음식을 같이 나누어 먹음으로써 '정'을 느끼며, 이는 단단한 결속으로 이어진다. 남한으로 홀로 내려온 탈북인들은 자신들이 함께 나누는 기억들을 통해 (technologies of memory) 과거를 잇는 다리를 만들고, 이것은 현재의 연대를 유지할 수 있는 감정에도 강력하게 기여한다. 결과적으로 탈북인들끼리 공유할 수 있는 연대의 감정과 통일에 대한 열망은 탈북인 커뮤니티를 형성하는데 중요한 영향을 끼친다고 할 수 있다. 이러한 방식으로 탈북인들은 남한의 새로운 사회정치적 환경 안에서 다양한 종류의 도움을 주고 받는 호혜적인 관계를 만들어가며, 이 관계들은 개개인의 생존에 꼭 필요한 '생명줄'의 역할을 한다. 그들 간의 결속은 오랫동안 지속되는 선물교환으로 더욱 견고해지기도 하며 서로에 대한 의무의 성격을 가지기도 한다. 이러한 관계는 여타 '우정'의 관계와는 그 깊이와 강도에서 다르다. 따라서 실제적인 교류가 불규칙적임에도 불구하고 유대는 매우 강력하다고 할 수 있다.

탈북인들 간의 이러한 연결고리는 공통의 상실의 감정에 크게 바탕을 둔다. 탈북인에게 상실의 감정은 자신들의 존재에 역사성을 제공하며, 시간차를 두고 새로이 도착하는 이들이 모두 공유할 수 있는 관념적인 토대로 작용한다. 즉 남한에 사는 탈북인들은 상실의 역사를 서로 나누며, 이러한 아픔의 나눔은 탈북인 커뮤니티의 시작점이 된다. 많은 탈북인들이 탈북 과정에서 겪은 정신적 외상의 경험과 그로 인한 외상 후 스트레스 장애 때문에 남한에서의 적응과 정착 과정 중에 심각한 어려움이 있다. 본 논문에서 조사했던 탈북인들은 교회 및 비정부단체 모임들을 통해 소외감과 어려움을 극복하고 남한 사회에 적응하는데 필요한 유대관계를 만들어가고 있었다.

핵심 단어: 한국, 탈북인, 정착, 유사친척, 기억, 정체성

Abstract

Manufacturing of Kinship in a Nation Divided:

An Ethnographic Study of North Korean Refugees in South Korea

-결별과 결속: 탈북인들의 친척 '만들기'-

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This thesis is the culmination of over two years of ethnographic field work and interviews with North Korean refugees (talbukin) living in Seoul, South Korea. This thesis asks several questions. What kinds of relationships are being created by talbukin in South Korea? How is the idiom of kinship invoked in each of the sites in which their social activities are most active? What 'technologies of memory' are employed to facilitate a connection to the past and a feeling of solidarity in the present? What is the significance of pseudo kinship to talbukin who are without consanguine ties in South Korea?

This thesis looks at how North Korean refugees, in particular those without blood based connections, create pseudo familial ties that, over time, offer emotional and instrumental sources of support for the individuals and facilitate adaptation to their new environment. These pseudo kin relationships are marked by deeply felt, mutually experienced feelings of *jeong*, obligation and understanding. They are developed over a long period of time, in environments in which the idiom of kinship is strongly and frequently invoked. Relationships

built and maintained by these individuals develop through informal and formal means, from the mundane actions of sharing a meal, telling stories and singing 'North Korean' songs, to more structured, government-sponsored lectures and church groups. These fictive kin relationships enable an extended social reach to compensate for fragmented blood-based family ties.

Furthermore, this thesis shines a light on the importance of memory to talbukin living in South Korea. North Korean refugees share a past rooted in memories of loss and separation. Through particular acts of communal remembering talbukin in South Korea remake their memories of home and develop and maintain feelings of solidarity in the present. For people who are without material reminders of home, and for whom a return is impossible, technologies of memory, in the form of the tastes and smells of hometowns, are essential for recreating and maintaining a connection to a time before leaving the North. Further to the significance of remembering, acts of forgetting, symbolised by changing names, a changing palette and the frequency of cosmetic surgery among North Korean refugees, are also of import in the process of making and unmaking connections to the past. In a nation divided since before the Korean War, the scars of separation are written deeply into the narrative and the bodies of the North Korean refugee community. For individuals who continue to experience political fracture on a very intimate level, the manufacturing of kinship in South Korea represents a search for continuity, both to a place which cannot be returned to, and to a future in which hope lies in the promise of reunification.

Keywords: South Korea, North Korean refugees, adaptation, pseudo kinship, memory, identity.